

II TIMOTHY 2:1-13

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Timothy chapter 2, beginning in verse 1, as we continue our study through the Word of God and Paul's second epistle or letter to Timothy!

As we saw last time, this letter is Paul's last will and testament, in a sense. It is his last letter he wrote before he was martyred for his faith in Christ by Emperor Nero.

And what we see in this letter is that Paul is trying to encourage his son in the faith, Timothy, to continue on in the work that God has called him to do, not to give up.

In a sense, Paul was passing his ministry on to the next generation, and Timothy was part of it!

In II Timothy 2:2 Paul uses the example of a teacher and he wants Timothy to pass on what God has given to him to others. And in sharing with others, instilling the things of God with others, it is not going to be easy and Paul gives to him these three examples to encourage him in the work.

The first example is that of a soldier in II Timothy 2:3-4.

Then he moves to the example of an athlete in II Timothy 2:5.

And he then concludes with the example of a farmer in II Timothy 2:6.

Then Paul deals with what Timothy was to remember and never forget, and, of course, it is all about Jesus.

The rest of the chapter, as we will see, deals with those who are approved of God and those who are disapproved – vivid lessons for not only Timothy to learn, but for all of us.

I think what Paul is saying to Timothy is for us today.

Too often we see Christians thinking that Christianity is an amusement park where you just meander through life, enjoying the scenery and the rides.

But the Christian life is not an amusement park, it is a battlefield and Paul want's Timothy to understand that. He doesn't want Timothy to think this is going to be easy, he wants him to forge ahead in the work that God has called him to do.

We will see this more next time, but look at what Paul said in II Timothy 2:14-16, **“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.”**

In other words, stay focused in the work, don't get distracted, and know what you believe and share it with others.

Before we get to our text this evening, let me share this with you, it will help set the stage for what we will be talking about.

We are told,

When Gideon assembled an army of 32,000 men to fight the allied armies of the Midianites numbering some 135,000, the odds did not look very good to Israel! The Midianites had a four to one advantage. Classic military wisdom today says that you need a one to four ratio to defend a position and that a one to four ratio when attacking is suicide. No wonder that most of the army of Israel trembled with fear.

God did not like the odds either (but for different reasons). So the Lord said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. . . . Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home’.”

So 22,000 left, making the new ratio one Israelite to thirteen Midianites (Judges 7:2, 3).

But God still did not like the odds. So he ordered a screening process in which all the remaining soldiers were observed as they drank from the Jordan.

Only the 300 who cupped their hands and drank were retained.

Now the odds were one Israelite to 450 Midianites!

We know the end of the story – how God used those 300 to surround the Midianites in the night with blaring trumpets and flaming torches, causing the Midianites to fall into confusion, destroying each other. God does not do things the way we do.

But think for a moment about the brave hearts of those 300 men. They had come from among the 10,000 who did not tremble. They had been willing to go into battle despite a one to thirteen disadvantage. And when the ratio became one to 450 they still hung tough.

They were *semper fidelis* (always faithful) all the way!

The impossible odds steeled their hearts. They might die, but they would die with their sandals on, defending Israel. So the middle of the night the 300 valiant men crept up to the edge of the Midianite camp (the size of some football stadiums) and issued their battle cry: “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” (Judges 7:20). *Semper fi!* [always faithful]

Men do not become battle-ready soldiers by hearing stories of easy victories and exotic lands, but by becoming men of gallantry and sacrifice. Fervent disciples are those who are energized by the challenge and rise to it.

With that said, let's begin reading in II Timothy chapter 2, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we learn to be faithful to the Lord no matter what comes our way, no matter how long it takes, no matter what we must do to gain that victory!

II TIMOTHY 2

VERSE 1

As we have seen in our study of I Timothy and now II Timothy, over and over again Paul admonishes Timothy to be strong, which tells me that Timothy may have been afraid. Maybe he wavered in what to do. Maybe he thought of giving up because the work was too big for him to do, or the problems were overwhelming. Even some of his elders had gotten into heresy and that can be discouraging, especially for Timothy!

And Paul's point here is not that this is a suggestion for Timothy, this is a command, this is what he needs to do each day! **"Be strong in the Lord."**

Paul's message to Timothy can be paraphrased like this, ***"You therefore, my son, I command you to continue each day without ceasing to draw your strength from God's grace which is available to you through your relationship with Jesus."***

The key here is that Paul is not admonishing Timothy to take some kind of Karate class so he can defend himself. Paul is not speaking of building up the body to defend himself.

No, Paul is speaking of that inner strength that God gives to us and that inner strength is manifested in outward actions.

In other words, as frail, as timid as Timothy might have been, Paul tells Timothy, ***“Son, you are weak, but God is strong. Rest in His strength and He will enable you to do great things. His grace is sufficient for you!”***

Now here is where many of us get into trouble. We just sit around and expect God to do great things through us.

That is not what Paul is saying. His point is simple. Yes, it is all about God enabling us to do the work, but then we must take those steps of faith and walk.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. As Moses died, Joshua was now going to lead the children of Israel into the Promise Land, and he had some fear, some uncertainty. Moses led them for forty years and they didn't make it there.

Thus, in Joshua 1:2-9 we are told, **“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will**

make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Notice, his strength is from the Lord, so he was not to be afraid, but it didn't end there.

Joshua needed to walk into the Promise Land, he was to defeat the enemies who outnumbered them, who were stronger than they were and yet they had the Lord fighting for them and in their weakness, even though they didn't deserve it, God extended His grace and brought them into the Promise Land giving them great victories.

Paul is saying the same thing to this timid young pastor and to each of us! Timothy did not deserve this from God, none of us do. But it was a grace gift that God had given to him! And now he needed to walk accordingly!

You see, we are saved by grace, we are sustained by grace, we serve by grace and one day we will be taken to glory by the grace of God, not because we deserve it, but because He loves us that much! It is a free gift.

In knowing that, what happens so often is that Satan steps in. He hates God, he hates all that God gives to us, and thus, he wants to destroy that gift of God through legalism.

In other words, you have to do this and don't do that. You have to live up to a certain standard or God won't give you this grace gift.

But doesn't that negate what grace is all about? You bet it does because grace is getting something we don't deserve and as soon as we put legalism in there, and we are working for this, then it is no longer grace, but it is works and God owes us this. No, He never did, and He will never owe us anything, but his amazing grace, how sweet that sound, that saved a wretch like me and like you!

VERSE 2

Here is what ministry is all about, teaching others the things that God has taught you.

Paul starts out by saying, “**And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses . . .**”

Timothy traveled with Paul for some twenty-five years. He heard the messages that Paul gave. He heard how he spoke to different people with different backgrounds about the Lord.

And the main thing is that Paul’s message did not change, it was still all about Jesus and the gift of life He has given to us through His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary and rising from the dead on the third day – ***THE GOSPEL MESSAGE!***

Make no mistake about it, Paul was not a man pleaser. He served the Lord faithfully throughout his life. And even though the message was difficult for many to hear, it did not stop Paul from sharing with them the love of Jesus!

And here he is, at the end of his life, and he is admonishing Timothy to take the words Paul shared and commit them to men who will be able to then go and teach others, faithful men!

And as these faithful men hear and take the message to others, it is passed on again and again and again! It just keeps going, at least it should!

As a pastor, this is one of the most important things that I can do, train others to do the work of the ministry!

Now, we may ask ourselves, “***Who are these faithful men?***”

They, of course, are believers and they are also servants. They are not looking to be served but to serve others with the things of God. That is a very important lesson.

So Paul tells Timothy, ***“I have poured God’s truth into your life, now you find men who are faithful to God, filled with the Holy Spirit and disciple them as well. Pour your life into them so that they can pour their lives into others!”***

Let me give you this example to show you how simple things of faith can be passed down to others and impact their lives tremendously. We are told,

. . . In the early seventeenth century Dr. Richard Sibbes wrote a little book about Christ called ***The Bruised Reed***. A copy of that book fell into the hands of a tin peddler, who gave it to a boy named Richard Baxter, who became the greatest of Puritan pastors. Baxter wrote, among other things, ***A Call to the Unconverted***, which Philip Doddridge read in the early eighteenth century, and he in turn wrote ***The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul***.

William Wilberforce read that book, and it so changed his life that he led the fight for the abolition of slavery. He was a tiny, stunted man but had such eloquence for Christ that James Boswell immortalized it by writing that during one of his speeches “the shrimp grew and grew and grew and became a whale.” Indeed Wilberforce became a huge influence in nineteenth century British culture and saw the abolition of slavery in Britain just three days before his death. Significantly, Wilberforce has been an inspiration for Charles Colson and the organization he founded, Prison Fellowship.

- R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1-2 Timothy and Titus – To Guard the Deposit, pp. 209-210

We may not always know the outcome of what we are doing, but can we be faithful and pass the things of God down to others, faithful people who will continue to teach others the things of God? We need to!

That is a huge responsibility for Timothy, and Paul is going to help him to get focused, to stay on course, to be patient in the work, because, as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

May we not lose sight of that. We are in a battle and thus, Paul is going to show how a soldier in the Lord’s army needs to have a mind that is focused on the Lord or single-mindedness!

VERSES 3-4

First of all, as you are going to teach others, understand you are in a battle for the faith. So Paul starts out by speaking of a soldier as he shows Timothy what a strong spiritual life is all about.

Please understand that what Paul is saying here is not a suggestion, but it is a requirement for him to follow – to be a soldier in the battles that are before him.

The picture I see Paul painting here is that a soldier needs to be *FOCUSED* because he will face hardships, not that he might.

He must be obedient to his commanding officer and not let the things of this world distract him for what he is called to do.

Paul, picturing a Roman soldier, saw how he had a purpose; he was not distracted from the work he was called to do by his commanding officer.

Think of it like this. If you are in a battle against the enemy and you are partnered with someone who is waving a white flag all the time, giving up, do you really want him to be your partner? Absolutely not. You want someone who is going to be focused and will continue to fight to the end!

A good soldier does not give up just because he is facing hardship!

And as believers, that should be our attitude as well. And if it is not, if you are not willing to endure hardship, then you will never accomplish much for the Lord.

It is interesting because if you look at the armor of God given to us in Ephesians chapter 6, there is nothing really covering our backend. Why is that?

Because, as Christians, we are never in retreat, we are forging ahead for the Lord and our equipment, the things the Lord has given to us will see us through because the battle is His and all we must do is walk by faith!

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-27, “**... ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.’**” May we be faithful in our service for the Lord!

Now let me add this because this is one of the problems that has come into the church today and because of it, many are unwilling to endure hardships for Christ. What is the problem?

The problem is this. Many Christians have been led to believe that the Christian life is all about them. It is about their wealth, their prosperity, their success, their needs met.

Make no mistake about it, it is all about Jesus, it is all about others and then, it is about you! You see, if you are so focused on other things instead of the Lord, well, it is impossible to serve two masters and you will have to choose, will it be the Lord or other things?

And the reality is, most of us don't really understand what war is about, the cost, how these men are focused in what they are doing, and many Christians are not taught about the warfare they are in.

One writer tells us of some very brave soldiers a he wrote,

Knowing they would be mowed down by Nazi machine guns, the first soldiers off the landing craft at Omaha Beach charged valiantly.

Those who miraculously made it to shore safely began to climb the cliffs, knowing they were most likely climbing to their deaths.

What would cause a man to hit the beach or to climb a cliff, knowing he would be gunned down in the process?

Subsequent studies have shown that the heroes of D-Day did so out of respect and appreciation for their commanding officer and fellow soldiers.

The concept of fighting for one's country is sometimes too big, too abstract.

But risking one's life for the safety of one's commander or for the safety of the soldiers right beside him makes sense.

- Jon Courson

And that is what we will be looking at next. You see, as a Christian, the Lord is our commanding officer and we need to be in complete obedience to Him.

But before we get to that, let me finish up with these verses. Paul is telling us that we need to stay **FOCUSED** on what He has called us to do and not let the affairs of this life entangle us, stop us from what we are to do.

Now please understand that Paul is not necessarily speaking of things that are wrong, but anything that can interfere with what we are called to do.

I can give you an example in my own life. I love to run, I love to race and when I was first married, I ran many races, even after I was saved.

Now there is nothing wrong with running or racing unless it interferes with my relationship with the Lord, and when it did, I cut back on my running and my racing.

If something you are doing, which may not be wrong, is interfering with your relationship with the Lord, you need to let it go and draw close to Him!

In fact, here in I Timothy 2:4, the word "**affairs**" in the Greek is a word we get the English word "**pragmatic**" from.

What is my point? It is simple. This word, "**pragmatic**" speaks of practical, everyday things, our daily things we do.

And like I have said, these "**affairs of life**" are not necessarily bad things but they can easily distract you from the work that God has for you, entangling you! Be careful.

And so, the mark of a good soldier is that he needs to be **FOCUSED** because in any battle there will be hardships and there will be things that come your way to entangle you or tie you up, preventing you from doing the work that God has called you to do!

Let me share this perspective with you and then I will share with you someone who is **FOCUSED** in the work that God called him to do.

We are told,

The strong desire to please other people is an integral characteristic of fallen man. And because of the continued influence of the old self (Eph. 4:22), even Christians are tempted to be men-pleasers.

Many Christians succumb to that temptation and become more concerned about pleasing their fellow workers, their neighbors, and their friends than about pleasing the Lord.

And for the same reason, many pastors fall into the trap of wanting to please their congregations or their communities more than to please the Lord. That desire inevitably leads to moral and spiritual decline, because pleasing the world, including worldly Christians, demands compromise of God's truth, God's standards, and personal holiness.

- John MacArthur

Again, be careful, stay ***FOCUSED*** on the Lord and the work He has called you to do!

Let me share with you what one man did, how he was ***FOCUSED*** in the work.

John Wesley traveled by foot or horseback some 250,000 miles, preaching more than 40,000 sermons . . . He lived simply and gave away most of whatever income he received. Yet he was continually ridiculed and pelted with stones by ungodly mobs and was ostracized by fellow clergymen in the Church of England. When maligned, he answered, "I leave my reputation where I left my soul, in the hands of God.

Make no mistake about it, Wesley was no 'man-pleaser' and it cost him, just like Paul.

May we be good soldiers in the Lord's army, being single-minded in the work that God has called us to do!

VERSE 5

We saw how a soldier is to be **FOCUSED**.

And now Paul now speaks of the athlete, that he must follow the rules, or he will be disqualified from the competition.

The idea that Paul is trying to get across to Timothy is that of **OBEDIENCE!**

The Greek Games, still held in Paul's day, had every athlete meet three qualifications.

- He needed to be born a Greek.
- He had to prepare for at least 10 months for the games and then swear before a statue of Zeus attesting to that fact.
- And then he had to follow the rules of the event he was in.

To fail in any of those requirements meant automatic disqualification.

As Christians, we too must be **OBEDIENT** to the Lord and follow the rules He has set for us to compete.

First of all,

- We must be born again or saved, that is obvious.
- We must be dedicated to the work that God has called us to do, not lackadaisical about it!
- And thirdly, we must put forth a constant effort in the work.

And think about this for a minute. If you are a serious athlete do you compete to come in second or third? Of course not, you compete for only one reason and that is to win!

And if you are going to win you are going to have to be disciplined in how you train. You will have to sacrifice a lot and work hard.

Remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 9:25-27, “**And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**”

And please keep in mind that “Our spiritual competition is not, of course, against other Christians. Trying to outperform another believer is far from spiritual. Rather, our competition is against our fleshly old self, against the world, and against Satan and those who serve him.”

(Source Unknown)

We need to know who the enemy is, and we need to fight with certainty. We need to discipline our bodies so that we don’t fall prey to sin and disqualify ourselves from service!

We must obey the rules.

I don’t know if any of you follow the Tour de France and how Lance Armstrong won seven titles! That is amazing.

But then the truth came out and it was found that he was doping and thus, since he did not follow the rules, he was disqualified and stripped of all seven of his Tour de France titles.

Some of you may remember Rosie Ruiz and what she did. Rosie Ruiz was a Cuban American woman who was declared the winner in the female category for the 84th Boston Marathon in 1980. An amazing victory.

But then it was found out she cheated and had her title stripped eight days after the race. They discovered that she had not run the entire course. She did not follow the rules!

May we follow the rules and run the race to win. May we “**. . . do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**” Philippians 4:13.

And so, the mark of a good athlete is his **OBEDIENCE** to the rules so he may receive the crown!

And we have one more to go, the farmer. Let's read on and see what Paul has to say here.

VERSE 6

So we have seen that a soldier is to be **FOCUSED**.

Then we looked at the athlete, and he is to be **OBEDIENT**.

The next picture Paul paints for us is that of a farmer and what I see here is Paul teaching Timothy **PATIENCE**.

Let's face it. Being a farmer is not a glamorous job, you work hard, and it takes time before the harvest comes and you see the fruit of your labor.

Listen to what Paul says in Galatians 6:9-10, "**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**"

It is easy to grow weary as you serve the Lord. You expect fruit from your labor instantly. But that is not how it works. It takes time.

And James picks up on that in James 5:7-8 as he wrote, "**Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**"

Don't give up, be like the farmer who tills the soil, plants the crops and then waits for the harvest down the road.

And yes, it is not easy, but, as James reminds us, “. . . the coming of the Lord is at hand.” Praise God for that!

I like how one writer summed this up for us. He wrote,

Many Christians’ lives are like the farmers. Although there may be occasional times of excitement and special satisfaction, the daily routine is often, in itself, unattractive and unrewarding. But whatever their day to day responsibilities may involve, all faithful believers are promised God’s [future] blessing and reward.

- John MacArthur

How true that is, may we not forget it.

Now I think the point that Paul is making here is that before Timothy can give spiritual food to the congregation, the Word of God, he must first partake of it himself!

If he is not being fed the Word of God, partaking of the Word of God, then how can he feed others? He can’t!

I know you may not believe this, but when I prepare these messages, I think I get more out of them than you do.

Why do I say that? Because I am preparing and what I am sharing is only a small part of what the Lord was showing me as I studied His Word.

And thus, for me, for all of us, we must learn to be *PATIENT*.

Yes, it is work as a pastor pours his heart, his life into people, but it takes time. The fruit will come.

I also know that God’s Word is living, and it is powerful and the only thing that can stop it from working in you is *YOU!*

The key to the hardworking farmer is **PATIENCE!**

Listen to how Paul sums this all up for us in II Timothy 2:7.

VERSE 7

Paul is saying to Timothy, *“Son, as I have shared with you what the Lord has given to me, think these things over and ponder them. Examine your own life and ask yourself if you are a strong Christian, a spiritual Christian, a mature Christian. Examine yourself and see for the Lord will give you the understanding you need if you are listening to Him.”*

And look at how he opens this verse up. He says, **“Consider what I say.”** And again, this is not a suggestion, it is a command.

Remember how Paul explained the Christian life with three illustrations. He spoke of the life of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer and in each of them, there is the idea of persevering until the work is completed!

- The soldier who stops fighting before the battle is finished will never see victory.
- The athlete who stops running before the race is over will never win the race.
- The farmer who stops working before the harvest is complete will never see the fruit of his crops.

It is as C. K. Barrett wrote, as he sums this up for us, “Beyond warfare is victory, beyond the athlete’s effort is the prize, and beyond the agricultural labor is the crop.”

So, as Paul encouraged Timothy to **“be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”**

As he told Timothy to take those things that he had taught Timothy and to **“commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”**

He then admonishes Timothy to be like a . . .

- A **SOLDIER** who is **FOCUSED** on the work his commanding officer has given to him.
- An **ATHLETE** who is **OBEDIENT** to the rules that are before him.
- A **FARMER** who works hard and is **PATIENT**, waiting for the harvest to come in.

Thus, **“Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.”**

II Timothy 2:7.

VERSES 8-9

Paul opens up these verses with the word **“Remember.”** And in the Greek, it is a command that goes something like this, ***“Keep on remembering, don’t you ever forget it!”***

In other words, ***“Keep the main thing the main thing!”***

And the main thing is Jesus, God who became flesh and dwelt among us, born from the lineage of David and raised from the dead giving us the confidence that in Christ we will have eternal life and one day we will be raised up or resurrected from the dead, receiving eternal bodies just as our Lord did!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 6:14, **“And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.”**

Paul wants Timothy to keep Jesus at the forefront of his message, not to lose sight of Him!

On Facebook, I am sorry to say, are some Christians that believe in a flat earth and they are proud of it, and they look down upon those who disagree with them.

And I tried to reason from the Scriptures with them, but there is no way that they were going to listen.

And I finally put this on the post. I said something like this, *“You can believe whatever you want about the shape of the earth, that is your choice. And you fight very hard showing that the earth is flat. But what you don’t speak of is Jesus and isn’t it all about Him? It doesn’t matter if you are right or wrong about a flat earth, but if you are wrong about Jesus, you lose everything. So don’t you think we should be talking more about Jesus?”*

I heard nothing back except about the earth being flat! May we keep the main thing the main thing, and like I have said, the main thing is Jesus.

In fact, Jesus held the Jews accountable for not seeing Jesus in the Scriptures. Remember what Jesus said in John 5:39-40, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”**

And I do realize them some have come to the faulty conclusion that Jesus is a New Testament idea, that the Jewish Scriptures, the Old Testament, never spoke of God becoming flesh to save us from our sins.

I disagree. The Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament, is what Jesus was speaking of in John chapter 5!

And there are many places we can look at in the Old Testament, but let’s just start in Genesis 3:15 where we are told after Adam sinned, **“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”**

I realize that does not mean God will accomplish this, it just speaks of the seed of the woman, which is interesting in itself, for the man is the one that carries the seed to fertilize the egg. So there is a hint of the virgin birth here.

Then, in Micah 5:2 we are told, **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”**

In other words, this babe in the manger, the one who is to be born in Bethlehem always existed, he is eternal, from *“beyond the vanishing point.”*

Folks, that is an attribute that only God has!

And there are over 300 prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament that are related to His first coming and have been fulfilled down to the tiniest detail!

Also, in the New Testament, in Revelation 13:8, we are told, **“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”**

Notice, before the world was created, Jesus, God Almighty, knew what He would have to do to save us from our sins!

Obviously we can look at other passages, but I think you get the idea, as we are told in Matthew 1:23, **“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’”**

You see, not a man or a god, but God with us!

And that is what we read in John chapter 5, that the Jewish Scriptures themselves were a witness of Him. Remember what Jesus said, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”** John 5:39-40.

May we not lose sight of this fact, that Jesus is the main thing!

Now in II Timothy 2:8, when Paul says “**according to my gospel**” some get confused by this. What does he mean?

He is not saying that this is something he came up with on his own. Paul received this Gospel, which means Good News, into his life as he received Jesus into his life as Lord and Savior, and thus, he could say that it was his Gospel, it was his Good News!

What is good news to you?

We can put all kinds of things like; money, jobs, a house, a car and-so-on.

But if the greatest news to you is Jesus, then you can say as Paul said, “**according to my gospel**” because it is yours!

And the result of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, “**for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains.**”

Paul tells Timothy that he is suffering as someone who has done evil, what evil did Paul do?

Like I have said, he proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel message.

Thus, when people reject it, they will try to silence those who proclaim the Good News.

Paul in II Corinthians 11:23-33 gives to us some insight into what he went through for the Gospel sake.

He tells us, “**Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own**

countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.”

Timothy witnessed some of the trouble Paul endured as he preached the Gospel message and now, he wants Timothy not to forget that, why?

To encourage Timothy not to give up, to finish the work no matter what may come his way, no matter how difficult it will get.

In fact, in II Timothy 3:12 Paul said, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”**

If you are serving the Lord, if you are living a life that is pleasing to the Lord you ***WILL*** suffer persecution, not might!

People will come against you because your light exposes their darkness. Thus, they try to extinguish the light, put it out – don’t let them!

Look at the life of Jesus as an example for you.

He healed the sick, freed those who were demon possessed, raised the dead, fed the hungry, comforted the brokenhearted, had compassion for people and they put Him to death!

Thus, if they did this to Jesus, then we, as His servants can expect no less if we are living godly lives, speaking forth the truths of God.

Jesus warned us in John 15:18-20 of this as He said, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**

And Paul, admonishing us to fight against sin, not to give up or give in, to endure the hardship of living a holy life, tells us in Hebrews 12:2-3, **“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”**

Folks, faithful service to the Lord, being His disciple is costly, it has always been costly. In Hebrews 11:35-38 we are told, **“... Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.”**

How did they do it?

It is as Paul said, **“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”** Acts 20:24.

Did you know that there were over 600 miles of catacombs under the city of Rome, nearly all dug and used by ten generations of Christians and for a period of some 300 years?

These catacombs were used as meeting and burial places for over four million Christians!

Now think about the millions of Christians who have been martyred for their faith in our generation.

In fact, more Christians have been martyred for their faith in our generation than any other time in church history!

The cost of being His disciple is high, but it is what we have been called to endure!

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

John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress while in jail in Bedford, England for preaching the Gospel.

They thought they put a stop to the Word of God being proclaimed and yet, Pilgrim's Progress, for many years was the second most popular book, behind the Bible!

Nothing can stop God's Word from going forth except us by keeping silent, by watering it down, by abandoning it!

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.**"

VERSE 10

Paul opens up this verse with the word, “**Therefore**” and the idea here is he is reflecting back on what he has just said.

Think about it like this, “*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 Paul said that he is doing this all “**for the sake of the elect.**”

Who are these elect that Paul is speaking of?

Some say it is speaking of the Jews, and that can be because we see that both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, it just depends on the context of the verse.

Others say that in the New Testament it is speaking of Gentiles and that is true, we see that in the New Testament as well, it all depends on the context of the verse.

But when you look at the context here, and you remember where Paul was at, in prison in Rome and preparing to be put to death for his faith, I think he has another idea here.

First of all, we see that Greek scholar A. T. Robertson said that when Paul talks about the elect in II Timothy 2:10 he has in mind all who are saved both Jew and Gentile.

But Robertson also says, that in the Greek, when Paul said, “*that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” the Greek is literally, “*that they as well as I may obtain the salvation . . .*”

What is the point.

I don't think Paul is speaking of a salvation from hell here, but of the salvation or the redemption of the body, which will take place at the Rapture of the Church when we are raised with our glorified bodies and we will experience that "**eternal glory.**"

Listen to what Paul said in Romans 8:18-25, he is speaking of these new bodies that we earnestly groan to obtain. He wrote, "**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 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.* For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**"

The fact that Paul knew he was going to die soon no doubt caused him to focus on eternal glory and the salvation or redemption of his body after he was executed by the Roman government.

We long for that day and that glory but think about all the glory that is poured out on people when they die.

They could have been a wicked person and yet, at their funeral, they are spoken of as a saint.

Maybe you heard of the story of the two wealthy men who were wicked, filthy, lived a very immoral life and one day one of the brothers, Bob, died.

So his other brother went to the priest and said that he wanted him to do Bob's funeral service and if he could speak of how good Bob was.

The priest knew both of these men and he knew they were bad people and he must have had a worried look on his face, for the dead man's brother said to the priest, "If you do this I will give you a million dollars, just say some good things about him!"

The priest agreed to do it.

At the service the priest got up and started to share. He said, "All of you know Bob, the lifestyle he lived. He was a drunkard, a womanizer, he spoke filthy words, he was dishonest."

At this point the dead man's brother looked at the priest, confused, upset and the priest looked at him and said, "Yes, Bob was all these things, but compared to his brother Pat, he was a saint!"

Folks don't look for the praise of men, but the praise of God as you serve Him.

We will one day be raised up in glory to be with our Lord and Savior.

Paul, in Romans 8:16-17 put it this way, "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if [since] indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**"

It is a glory that outshines anything that the world has for us and by God's grace we will be raised up in glory one day!

Listen to how Paul sums this all up.

VERSES 11-13

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

This hymn starts out with a promise of resurrection life for those who have died in Christ.

What is Paul's point here?

Some feel that Paul is speaking of those who have been martyred for their faith in Christ, but I think it goes far beyond that.

You see, I think Paul is speaking of all believers who have died in Him. They have died to the old life, they are living for Him and in the end, these physical bodies will die but we will go to be with the Lord!

Next Paul speaks of those who endure, those who are faithful believers; they will receive an eternal reward. We will reign with Christ in the Kingdom Age! Thus, in this life we are being prepared for the next life, for resurrection life with Christ!

But here is a warning. If you deny Christ, He will deny you!

In Matthew 10:33 Jesus said, "**But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.**"

You see, count the cost, and don't make an empty profession of faith so that as things get tough, you deny the Lord.

I don't believe those that deny the Lord were ever saved for their failure to endure and hold onto their relationship with Christ shows they were never saved in the first place.

Now we all fall into denying the Lord when we fail to stand for the Lord, as happened with Peter.

The thing is, it is not a continual denial but a temporary one. But if your life is given over to denying Jesus, then you are lost!

And in the end, when all is said and done, all that the Lord is, is not 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!

Let me share with you this example of Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park.

Old Faithful erupts about every ninety minutes.

Say you are sitting there, waiting, and you get tired of waiting after about 45 minutes and something in the woods gets your attention, a big elk, so you go into the woods looking for it.

I, on the other hand wait and at ninety minutes Old Faithful erupts.

After a while you return, and you don't see it erupt. Did Old Faithful erupt? You didn't see it!

Here is the thing, no matter what you do or say, Old Faithful will erupt, it is not based upon what you see or what you say.

Thus, no matter what you do or say about the Lord, He is still King of kings and Lord of lords! His blessings will flow no matter if you are faithful or not.

You may miss out on those blessings just because you were not there, but they still flow from God and God is still God!

As I close this evening, think about what we have seen.

That a soldier is to be ***FOCUSED***.

The athlete is to be ***OBEDIENT***.

The farmer must be ***PATIENT***.

May we continue on in the faith and never surrender to anyone or anything except the Lord.

When one Christian in the days of the ancient Roman Empire was commanded to give money to the building of a pagan temple, he refused; and though he was old, they stripped him practically naked, and cut him all over his body with knives and spears.

They started to feel sorry for him, so they said, “Just give one dollar to the building of the temple.” But he still would not.

“Just burn one grain of incense to this pagan god,” they asked – but he would not.

So, he was smeared with honey, and while his wounds were still bleeding, they set bees and wasps upon him until he was stung to death. He could die; but he could not deny his Lord.

The Lord can give you the same strength to live for Him, even as this man died for Him.

Semper fidelis (always faithful).