

## Why be and remain a Christian? 2 Timothy 2:8-13

### What keeps you going?

Why keep going as a Christian, a disciple making disciple of Jesus?

Why keep going following Jesus and sharing the gospel of Jesus, the good news that Jesus is the Lord who can give life and immortality to those who believe in Him?

Timothy may well have been thinking that to himself as he read Paul's call to suffer for Jesus and the message of Jesus.

Paul has been clear and direct.

*2 Tim. 1: 8 So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.*

*2 Timothy 2: 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

And Paul's life witnessed to the reality of that suffering – as you heard in our reading he is suffering “*to the point of being bound like a criminal.*”

Paul's is Hardly an attractive example and enticing appeal – join me in my chains and hardship

And you, if you are a believer, might also be asking why keep going after you heard last week that

Being unashamed of the gospel, keeping on believing the gospel that Jesus is Lord and being committed to passing on that message and what it means, would mean Suffering

The suffering of the soldier who is single minded in pleasing the one who enlisted him

Of the athlete who disciplines her or himself to compete according to the rules

Of the farmer who works hard, day in, day out, unobserved and unapplauded. [2 Tim. 2:4-7]

And if you are not yet a believer in Jesus you might be thinking – if keeping going sounds so tough, why even bother starting

I mean, life is short, and you only get one shot at it.

Why complicate it? Why start on a path when those who are on it are telling you there will be suffering along the way?

Paul wasn't always a believer in Jesus but, suffering now for being a believer in Jesus, Paul tells us in vv. 8-13 why it is worth starting to follow Jesus and, having started, why it is worthwhile to keep going following Jesus and making His message, the Christian gospel, known – whatever hardship and opposition you face

And the reason is in the message itself,

Jesus' gospel's content, power and promise.

So if you've been wondering about committing yourself to Jesus

Or if you have been confronted by what Paul has said

Or you have been finding it hard going as a believer sharing the message of Jesus

Listen up, for if we know the truth for ourselves of what Paul writes here – we will be glad to start following Jesus, whatever the cost

And in times of weakness, or times when we seem to be just limping along in our Christian walk, times of frustration, times of hardship, as well as times of blessing, we won't give up

We will keep going, persevering with thankfulness and confidence in following Jesus and making Him known through His word.

## **The gospel**

### **The Gospel's Content [Romans 1:3-4, 1 Cor. 15:3-4]**

*2 Timothy 2:<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,*

Remember Jesus Christ

It is continuous – keep on remembering, continually remember, Jesus Christ

This is not the school re-union remembering

You know those conversation – Whatever happened to Bill?

Bill?

Yes, the bloke who glued your desk shut

Oh Bill, now I remember

Not that kind of remembering

This is identity shaping and present motivating remembering – like Anzac remembering

But doing it every day

This is keep at the front of your mind always, never forgetting for a moment, remembering

Remember continuously Jesus Christ

You might think it strange to call a Christian to do that – we have Christ in our name

But the reality is we are good at forgetting

At becoming pre-occupied with the affairs of our business, or the concerns of our families, we can be overwhelmed with events, with joys and sorrows

Our Lord knew this

He gave us the Lord's Supper so that we would remember Him

For doing what Paul says, remembering Christ continuously, always being conscious of the Lord Jesus

Is the key to the Christian life

To knowing who we are, where we have come from, where we are heading, how we should live each day as believers

The key to a life of thankfulness and joy

Paul here highlights two elements of the gospel message that will be particularly helpful for Timothy and all of us to remember

Remember Jesus Christ, Risen from the dead

Christians can get used to that phrase – ‘risen from the dead’

But no one else has done that

Walk around a big cemetery, and then multiply those graves across the world, across the centuries

See the millions and millions who once lived like you

And now lie there, bare bones, in their graves or tombs

And then if you can bear it think of the sundering of love, of the tears that have flown, the tsunami of grief that is human history

Death takes us all, it is the veil that covers all nations [Isaiah 25:6-8]

And then say – Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead

In our Lord there is a power of life that death cannot touch, death can't hold him in the grave

Think of that power, that life welling up, irrepressible, for ever

Think the Jesus we remember lives – lives to hear us

Not dead and distant, but living and near to help us, to help, to save, all who call on Him

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead

Descended from David

You might think this is just a throwback to Paul's Jewish past or a nod to any Jewish readers

But it was important to Paul [Romans 1:3-4] and it should be important to us

Because it tells us why Jesus' resurrection matters

Jesus' resurrection wasn't just some kind of random, isolated event, just good for Jesus

When Paul says the gospel proclaims Jesus as descended from David he is saying that Jesus is the one in whom the plan of God from eternity and the promises of God revealed to His people over centuries

the plan and promise of God to bring His people to live securely with Him, at peace in His presence forever, is fulfilled.

You can get the flavour of those promises by thinking of passages we often hear at Christmas.

*Isaiah 9:*<sup>6</sup> *For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

The descendant of David would have an eternal rule [2 Samuel 7:11-18, 25-28; cf Is. 55:3]. There will never be a return to chaos or the oppression of evil -but peace, righteousness, justice

And it would be a universal rule – as you heard in Psalm 2, all who oppose Him will be subjected to Him, their rebellion vanquished by Him.

Those who live in His kingdom are secure.

And you sense the character of His rule and what it means for all creation in Isaiah 11

*Isaiah 11: Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.  
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—  
a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
a Spirit of counsel and strength,  
a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.  
3 His delight will be in the fear of the Lord.  
He will not judge  
by what he sees with his eyes,  
he will not execute justice  
by what he hears with his ears,  
4 but he will judge the poor righteously  
and execute justice for the oppressed of the land.  
He will strike the land  
with a scepter from his mouth,  
and he will kill the wicked  
with a command from his lips.  
5 Righteousness will be a belt around his hips;  
faithfulness will be a belt around his waist.  
6 The wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the goat.  
The calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf will be together,  
and a child will lead them.  
7 The cow and the bear will graze,  
their young ones will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like cattle.  
8 An infant will play beside the cobra's pit,  
and a toddler will put his hand into a snake's den.*

*<sup>9</sup>They will not harm or destroy each other  
on my entire holy mountain,  
for the land will be as full  
of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the sea is filled with water.*

Saying the Lord Jesus is the descendant of David who has defeated death is saying that He is God's King who exercises the judgment of God – who can forgive or condemn

Who will be your judge and mine, and so the one who can give certain forgiveness, never overturned forgiveness, for it is the forgiveness of the last day

It is saying He is God's The King with the power of life, new life, life that death cannot destroy, that He can give to all who trust Him

Who can welcome his people into the New heaven and earth forever or shut its doors to us,

When you are remembering *Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,*

*2 Timothy 2:<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,*

You are remembering that the Lord Jesus is the living, saving King, with all authority and authority over all

The one in whom God's plans for all creation and all time are realized.

And where do we learn this about Jesus?

Where do we meet this risen, reigning Jesus who can forgive and give new life, who will bring justice and peace?

Remember Jesus - 'According to my gospel'

We learn the truth about Jesus in Paul's gospel

It is not Paul's because he has made it up

It is Paul's because it has been entrusted to him

The Lord made him 'a herald, an apostle, and teacher' [1:11]

Given to Paul by Jesus because the Lord wants His gospel known, known to the world, known to those dying without hope of life

This is the content of the gospel being entrusted now to Timothy and through those like Timothy to us

The gospel we are to keep believing and sharing

It is all about Jesus and it is so good!

Here is news that the Lord Jesus who was humble and meek, who welcomed children, who turned away no one in need, who made the lame walk and the blind see, who preached good news to the poor

Is the ruler of God's kingdom

Not the violent and greedy, not the proud and selfish – they don't get the last word.

Jesus does

So good because here is a promise of life from the one who has conquered death, who can make that promise with certainty

So good because it is true

The gospel is news, a declaration of what God has done in history

Jesus risen from the dead is not an idea or philosophy. It is the report of a witnessed event. Those who knew him, those who saw him die, testifying that they had seen, spoken with touched and eaten with Jesus alive from the dead.

He had convinced them by His presence that having died and been buried He was now alive.

If you have questions about that, get in touch

Or learn about Jesus' resurrection as part of His bigger story, the gospel story by participating in Hope Explored with Andy

Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, is great good news

Believer, are you remembering Jesus?

Do you structure your day to keep the Lord Jesus as the forefront of your mind?

Daily habits of remembering, not forgetting?

Thanks at meals

A time of prayer, prayer throughout the day

Time to read His word?

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David*

Paul who calls us to remember is as he writes enduring suffering for this gospel because he knows it is not just good but powerful

### **Power**

<sup>9</sup>for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. <sup>10</sup>This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

With a line he brings us face to face with his circumstances

Bound. He may very well be chained, manacled as well as being imprisoned – he has certainly lost his freedom

HE has no power at all –

During Covid lockdowns we felt for ourselves in a small way the powerlessness of not being able to make plans, go where we want when we want, talk to who we want when we want

It is so much Worse for Paul. Unable to do anything of his own free will, powerless

And he has lost his reputation

The only other place the word translated criminal is used is in Luke's gospel to describe those crucified with Jesus, violent lawless men [Lk 23:32, 33, 39; lestes Matt. 27:38]

Paul is reckoned a serious criminal, a threat to the state

Paul is marginalised, slandered, powerless, suffering – not someone who is going to impress as the ambassador for a great king

Paul is not surprised by his circumstance, he doesn't see it as a contradiction to the truth of the gospel.

Jesus himself had warned that His messengers would face trial and imprisonment, hostility and suffering [Matthew 10, 24; John 15] and what is happening to Paul confirms the truth of what Jesus said

But Paul, and perhaps you, could see his situation damaging the reputation of the gospel, becoming an impediment to others believing it, an obstacle to the spread of the gospel, to people taking his message seriously – a King with all authority whose servants are beaten up and imprisoned!

And Paul could think, with this kind of association with shame and humiliation, this kind of press, this level of hostility – why bother. Surely the message could never succeed and so I may as well give up.

Not Paul. He might be bound *But the word of God is not bound.*

The word of God. That is what the gospel is, not a word of man, but the word of the living God. [1 Thess. 2:13, Col. 1:5]

But what does he mean when He says the word of God is not bound, and why is this a reason to keep on enduring

Paul is not talking here about the fact that even if he is in prison other people will preach the gospel

That is true [Phil. 1:12-14] but not the point here

Here he is speaking of the power of the gospel itself

He is contrasting the gospel with himself and his circumstances

He is bound – weak, his situation unattractive, unpersuasive in his chains

But his powerlessness, his weakness, does not make the gospel powerless or unattractive

The gospel does not take its power or its effectiveness from its messengers

It is the other way round

It is the word of the living God, the God whose word brought all things into being, the word of the God who has promised that His word will

*Isaiah 55:*<sup>10</sup> *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
<sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,*

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

You could as much make the living God weak and powerless as make His word powerless

It continues powerful in Paul's weakness, and that is why Paul,

Perseveres with preaching the gospel even in weakness and hardship, even as he suffers in chains , even at his trial [2 Tim. 4:17]

*<sup>10</sup> This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

You see, Paul knows the gospel entrusted to him is the means God will use to save His people, His elect.

Paul knows God has His people, not just amongst the Jews but also amongst the nations [Romans 9:23-24], those elected, chosen by God's grace, for salvation

And he knows God brings them to salvation through the preaching of the gospel. A belief in God's electing grace is not the enemy of evangelism

It is the motive for persevering evangelism, for continuing to speak the gospel even when it is unpopular and opposed.

Whatever the circumstance, because this is the means God uses to save His people, that gospel preaching will be fruitful.

It is by the gospel word, and only by the gospel word, that God's people will be saved.

Faith, writes Paul in Romans 10, comes through hearing, and so the word must be made known

*Romans 10: <sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on him they have <sup>14</sup> not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> And how can they preach unless they are sent? ..... <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.*

It is in this way Jesus will call his other sheep, by His word.

*John 10: <sup>16</sup> And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

we can make the gospel known with confidence whatever our circumstance – whether we are enjoying health or sickness, success or failure in the world's eyes, honour or dishonour.

The Word of God is not bound, always powerful and free to achieve God's saving purpose,.

This was brought home to me again this week as I was interviewing a young Iranian man who will be being baptised in the coming weeks.

I asked how God had brought him to want to be baptised.

He said someone had given him a Persian gospel, although it may have been a New Testament, on the street, and he started dreading it and read that he and his family could be forgiven through trusting the Lord Jesus.



Now I know the brother who gave him the gospel. He is unemployed, with all sorts of chaos in his life, now someone the world finds impressive

The gospel does not take its power from us, but from God.

Whatever our circumstances we can make it known and know it will do God's work.

And we should make it known. It is love to make it known for it brings those who believe it to obtain the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory.

'with eternal glory'

That phrase is a reminder again of how great and good is the salvation the gospel brings,

Of how the preacher of the gospel in his poverty brings us to immeasurable wealth

We don't think much about eternal glory

But the New Testament speaks often of the glory that will be believers

*Romans 5: <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*2 Corinthians 4: <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,*

The glory that was lost through sin, the glory of being able to live in the presence of God, to know Him, to see His face

Beyond our imagination as it is – will be ours, unending

Believers will share in the resurrection life of our Lord Jesus, glorious, eternal life in bodies fitted for the new heaven and earth, bodies changed to be like His glorious body

*Philippians 3: <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

This salvation in Christ the gospel brings is glorious

And Paul assures us this gospel does not become powerless in our powerlessness

It doesn't become marginal when we are marginalised

It doesn't depend on our success for its success

It will do its work in our weakness, irrelevancy, in our dismissal from consideration of the powerful

For it is the word of God

And the salvation it brings is good, so good

That is why it is worth us enduring all things to keep making it known, confident in the promises it brings

And to further encourage perseverance, keeping on as followers of Jesus who make the message of Jesus known, Paul brings home the goodness of the gospel by reminding Timothy and us of those gospel promises in a pithy summary

### **Promise**

<sup>11</sup> *This saying is trustworthy:*

*For if we died with him,  
we will also live with him;*

<sup>12</sup> *if we endure, we will also reign with him;  
if we deny him, he will also deny us;*

<sup>13</sup> *if we are faithless, he remains faithful,  
for he cannot deny himself.*

*For if we died with him,  
we will also live with him;*

If we died with Him. Paul is recalling the beginning of the Christian life, when we first believe the gospel, a beginning baptism is a pictures.

Speaking of that beginning Paul says in Romans 6

*Romans 6: <sup>3</sup>Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection. .... <sup>8</sup>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him,*

To become a believer is to die with Christ to the old way of life, to die to the power and rule of sin in our lives. [Gal. 2:19]

And the gospel that calls us to that death of repentance, the death of saying no to ourselves and yes to Jesus as our boss, our Lord, promises life.

Life in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, life free from the power of sin now so that we can walk in newness of life, in love

Life that will continue to share the resurrection life with Christ

The gospel promises life to all who repent and believe, life that starts now and continues into the new heaven and earth

And the gospel promises to those who persevere a share in Christ's reign

*<sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him;*

*Matthew 10: <sup>22</sup>You will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

[Matt. 10:22, 24:13, Rom. 8:16-17, Rev. 1:9, 13:10, 14:12]

*Revelation 3: <sup>21</sup>The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

This is the promise Jesus made to His followers. Those who endure to the end will be saved – it is certain.

And that salvation is pictured as sharing in Jesus' reign, co-heirs with Christ.

The humiliation and shame Paul endured will be exchanged for glory

The persecution believers endure at the hands of human judges will be exchanged for sitting on thrones of judgment

Where we endure – mocking and marginalized, threatened and slandered for Jesus' sake

Where we persevere in the drudgery of loving others, working as to the Lord

We will reign with Him in unimaginable greatness

The gospel promises this glory for all who endure, faithful to Christ, faithful to the task He has given us of making disciples

And the gospel also reminds us, warns us, that this life and glory is found only in Christ, and to abandon Christ is to be denied by Christ.

It is a reminder that what is at stake in enduring faithfully is not just the salvation of others, but our own

*if we deny him, he will also deny us;*

*Matthew 10: <sup>32</sup> "Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven.*

That is a serious word from our Lord. TO be denied by Jesus before the Father is to be left to face the judgement on your own, and to receive from a just God all that your deeds deserve, cast out from His presence into the darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth

And all these promises are certain, because they are the promises of the faithful God

*<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.*

Here is encouragement in our weakness and when we are dealing with the weak.

To be faithless is contrasted with the faithfulness of God.

So it is not apostasy, what Paul has just spoken of, denying Christ. To be faithless is to fail in faithfulness.

It is to be like Peter at the crucifixion, boasting of his faithfulness to Jesus and then running away. It is failing in your commitment to Him, a commitment you know He deserves.

You might have your own examples of being faithless

Where that faithlessness was not prompted by fear of violence, as Peter's was.

But fear of being different - When you were drawn in by friends to doing things which Jesus forbids – like getting drunk, or gossiping, or – whatever

Or fear of loss, when, for the sake of personal ambition, for advancement at work, you compromise ethically

Or fear of loneliness, when not wanting to lose the relationship you start having sex with your girlfriend or boyfriend, or abandon a lonely marriage

You fail in being faithful to Jesus and then, by God's grace, like Peter you feel the grief of that, a coldness, distance in your relation with the Lord, you are convicted you have betrayed your Lord

Here we learn that because God is who He is that failure need not be final

He will be faithful to Himself

He will be the God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, who forgives, as He forgave an adulterous David [Exodus 34:5-7]

And Jesus will be the Saviour He has said He came to be, gave Himself on the cross to be – the Saviour of sinners, whose sacrifice of Himself is sufficient to cover over the offence of all our sin, all our faithless failures

*1 Timothy 1: <sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*

*1 John 1: <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

God in His faithfulness makes a promise to those who believe in the Lord Jesus that He will forgive sin, just as He promises in 1 Corinthians 10 to provide a way of escape so that we need not sin.

*1 Corinthians 10: <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Believing the gospel brings us to put our hope, not in ourselves, but in God Himself

The God who will always be whom He has declared Himself to be. He will never deny Himself.

And that is a great encouragement

Encouragement to persevere when we know our own weakness and frailty. He remains faithful. Our failure need not be final

The failure you may be conscious of now need not be final

You can turn back for mercy and restoration

Encouragement when ministering to others in their failure.

That, as we will see next week, is part of the ministry Timothy is called to,

Timothy is to seek the repentance even of those who oppose him, who have believed lies. [2 Tim. 2:24-26]

Here is the encouragement that those he gently persuades and teaches can find their way back, can repent of their error and find forgiveness and restoration.

He needs that to persevere

And part of the ministry we all have to each other is to gently teach each other the truth, to call each other back from faithlessness – and here is the encouragement that it is worth it, worth the difficult conversation

For God will be true to Himself and forgive the repentant.

Why persevere following Jesus and sharing Jesus, unashamed of His gospel, even when, as Paul tells us, that perseverance will bring suffering, bring the hardship the good soldier, the dedicated athlete, the hardworking farmer.

Because of the gospel itself -

its content – the Lord Jesus, risen and reigning, the hope of the ages,

its power – the unbound Word of God,

and its promise – life, glory and mercy.

Do you know the goodness and power of the gospel of Jesus for yourself?

Have you heard Him calling you to Himself through His gospel?

If you are not yet a believer

It's Time to engage with Jesus in His word

Get to know Him, not a cultural Jesus, a Jesus enlisted in support of all kinds of causes, or maybe a scarcely remembered Jesus from your childhood, or a church Jesus

But Jesus in the word He sent out into the world so that we can know Him

Contact Andy – Hope Explored, read a gospel with a Christian friend, ask God for understanding

If yes, I believe the gospel

Are you rejoicing to remember that the Lord Jesus is risen from the dead, your living Saviour

Dying to yourself, do you live with and for Him now, and look forward to living with Him forever

When you fail, do you know His faithfulness, the glory of His never denying Himself, and so have turned back to Him and sought and found His kindness and forgiveness

And are you, because you know the gospel to be the word of God, know its power and the grace it brings, Confident, whatever your circumstances, to share it. There is no better word to share even if it brings difficulty, as it did for Paul

Jesus' word saves – not your arguments

Not your example

Not your having your life altogether

Not your personal impressiveness

But His gospel, that He was crucified for sins, raised from the dead, reigns now with all authority So share that gospel confidently

And Believer, for your own perseverance and joy, are you determined to deliberately structure your life to every day remember Jesus – by those small daily habits like thanks before meals, setting aside time to read His word, or listen to it, conscious prayer in all things, meeting with His people, sharing in the Supper

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David*

Our life, our glory, our hope