

Living in God's Church Today

Remember Jesus Christ

2 Timothy 2:8-13

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October 2, 2022

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Introduction

Late one night, Emanuel Lighe returned home to find police waiting for him. There was a death in the village, and Lighe's name topped the suspect list. Cuffed and detained, Lighe was questioned well into the night at the police station. He was refused the right to leave.

Hours turned into days; days dragged into weeks. Lighe remained at the police station, then was transferred to Prison Civile de Lomé, the main prison in the capital city of Togo in West Africa's Togolese Republic. He remained there for five years and four days.

Lighe was innocent.

Prison Civile de Lomé is a perilous place. Amnesty International cited the prison for its basic human rights violations. Built to house 500 inmates, the prison is packed with 1,800 inmates who live and sleep in one cramped, open-air yard. Infectious disease is rampant, and many prisoners die, often before they've served their sentences.

Lighe spent half a decade of his life in this prison—always hungry, always scared, always wondering how he, an innocent man, landed in this place.

“Life in prison is so difficult that it's hard to understand for outsiders: people get raped, beaten up. Money and possessions get stolen. There's a lot of violence and pressure,” he says.

For years, members of the Bible Society of Togo...have visited the prison, bringing food for the inmates and supplying them with another life-giving gift: the Bible.

For Lighe, the Bible became a source of life and hope. It inspired him daily to reach out to his fellow inmates, spreading God's word through preaching and living out its message. Although Lighe struggled to understand why he was placed in prison, God began to teach him that his detainment had a purpose: *He was there to minister to his fellow inmates.*

"I believe in God's power and God's Spirit, so I continued my work, because I am not ruled by man," says Lighe. With his purpose found and forged in the unlikeliest of places, Lighe thanked God for bringing him to prison.

After Lighe was released, he struggled to find work and was lost daily life. He knew something was missing, so he began to return to the prison regularly to visit friends and continue his ministry. Even though he's no longer a prisoner, Lighe commands the same respect among the inmates. Inside the walls he is the real, breathing picture of God's hope.

"A clear conscience fears no accusation," says Lighe. This message rings loudly through the Prison Civile de Lomé, a place transformed by men like Lighe and the powerful message he brings: *there is true freedom in Christ.*¹

The Apostle Paul was no stranger to imprisonment. He knew about harsh conditions. He had been abandoned by most of his friends and colleagues. He wrote this letter to Timothy while he waited to be executed. And yet, in spite of all that he was facing, Paul directed his spiritual son Timothy to the hope that is found in Christ. Paul exhorted Timothy to boldness, endurance, and faithfulness in the face of false teaching. Paul knew what it was to suffer for the gospel, and he wanted to give Timothy encouragements when suffering for the gospel.

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2012/february/5022012.html>.

Scripture

Let's read 2 Timothy 2:8-13:

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself. (2 Timothy 2:8-13)

Lesson

2 Timothy 2:8-13 gives us encouragements when suffering for the gospel.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The First Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Person (2:8)
2. The Second Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Power (2:9)
3. The Third Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Purpose (2:10)
4. The Fourth Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Promises (2:11-13)

I. The First Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Person (2:8)

The first encouragement is to remember the gospel's person.

Paul wrote in verse 8, **“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.”** Paul pointed Timothy to Jesus Christ, who was the supreme model of a faithful teacher (v. 2), soldier (vv. 3-4), athlete (v. 5), and farmer (v. 6). Timothy was to follow Jesus' example in teaching, suffering, pursuing the prize, and planting the seeds of truth for a spiritual harvest.

Moreover, Jesus is the focal point of the gospel. The gospel is all about Jesus. Paul insisted that there are two key points about this gospel. First, Paul alluded to Jesus' *work* in the phrase **“risen from the dead.”** This indicates that Jesus died for our sins and was raised back to life to show that his death satisfied the Father's wrath. It implies Jesus' divinity, for he was powerfully designated as God's Son by his resurrection from the dead.

And second, Paul alluded to Jesus' *person* in the phrase **“the offspring of David.”** This speaks of Jesus' descent from King David, his ancestor. It implies his humanity. So, these two phrases, taken together, allude to Jesus' divinity and humanity, and they also allude to his double role as King and Savior.

When I was at seminary, one period a week was dedicated to students meeting with a faculty member. Each student was assigned to a particular faculty member so that the faculty member may have had about 20 students in his group, although 12-15 students met with the faculty member each week. This was an opportunity to talk about life and Christian service, perhaps study a theological question, and pray for one another.

I vividly remember a pastor from Kenya in our group. He was a seasoned pastor of a church of about 800 members. One day he shared with us the importance and simplicity of 2 Timothy 2:8. I still remember him talking about the gospel being all about Jesus, particularly as we think about his humanity and his divinity, which was so wonderfully summarized in this short verse.

So, the first encouragement is to remember the gospel's person, and that person is none other than Jesus Christ.

II. The Second Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Power (2:9)

The second encouragement is to remember the gospel's power.

Paul mentioned the gospel in verse 8 and then went on to say in verse 9, **“for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!”** Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote these words. He was waiting to be executed for preaching the gospel. Yet he contrasted his imprisonment for the sake of the gospel to the unhindered power of the word of God. Paul's imprisonment had not in any way diminished the power of the gospel. When Paul preached the gospel, he faced tremendous opposition because Christianity was considered to be a threat to Jews and Gentiles alike. And yet he persevered with great boldness to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. He suffered severe persecution for the sake of advancing the gospel.

We live in a culture that was once friendly to the gospel. That is increasingly less the case. Our culture is becoming increasingly hostile to the gospel. We don't know what it is like—at least in western cultures where Christianity had once been

the dominant religion—to face opposition. We need a mighty army of Christians who will graciously and winsomely proclaim the gospel—regardless of the consequences.

So, let us remember the gospel's person and the gospel's power.

III. The Third Encouragement: Remember the Gospel's Purpose (2:10)

The third encouragement is to remember the gospel's purpose.

Paul wrote in verse 10, **“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”** Paul endured immense suffering to advance the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, he wrote:

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Why did Paul endure this suffering? He suffered all of this so that the elect might come to faith in Jesus.

It is sometimes said that we Christians are all missionaries. That is not right. All Christians are witnesses (see Acts 1:8). But only some are missionaries. According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, a “missionary” is “a person sent on a

religious mission.” Therefore, Christian missionaries leave the comforts of home to share the gospel with those who do not know it. I am so thankful for missionaries. They exemplify the truth of Paul’s statement in that they are willing to endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

And yet, all Christians are called to be witnesses. We are all to tell others about Jesus so that they can become Christians.

IV. The Fourth Encouragement: Remember the Gospel’s Promises (2:11-13)

And the fourth encouragement is to remember the gospel’s promises.

Paul wrote in verse 11a, **“The saying is trustworthy.”** This is the fourth of five **“trustworthy sayings”** in Paul’s Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; and Titus 3:8). Of the five sayings, this one is the longest. The expression **“The saying is trustworthy”** is an announcement of an important point or key doctrine. In Greek, the expression is literally, “Faithful the word.”

Paul then wrote in verses 11b-13, **“If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.”** These words most likely came from an early Christian hymn. Unfortunately, we do not have the whole hymn. These four lines move from comfort to challenge and back to comfort.

“If we have died with him” is a reference to a Christian’s union with Christ. Thus, if we are in Christ, we can be sure that **“we will also live with him.”**

“If we endure” refers to perseverance in the face of hardship. Having endured, **“we will also reign with him,”** meaning that we will be with Christ in glory.

“If we deny him” is a sober warning to those who once professed but no longer do so because, if we apostatize, Christ **“also will deny us.”**

“If we are faithless” is a reference to those who have weak faith. We are encouraged that Christ **“remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.”** Salvation does not ultimately depend on our faithfulness but upon the perfect faithfulness of Christ.

Christians sometimes go through many difficulties before they enter glory. They may even fall into grievous sin, as David did when he committed adultery and had Uriah murdered. They may even deny knowledge of Jesus, as Peter did when he denied knowing Jesus three times on the night of Jesus’ arrest. But, if a person is in union with Christ, that person can never lose his salvation. That is true because Jesus is always 100% faithful to his promise to save those who are united to him. What a Savior!

Conclusion

Therefore, let us remember the gospel which gives us strength for present and hope for the future.

The movie *Amistad* is about a slave ship filled with abducted African men, women, and children. In the face of starvation, beatings, rape, and murder, the Africans plan a coup on route from Africa to Cuba. On a stormy night, their leader, Cinque, unshackles his comrades. They seize the ship and order the planter to sail them back to Africa.

Instead of navigating them to Africa, however, the planter

lands them to an eastern American seaport, where the Africans are imprisoned.

On the eve of the judge's verdict, the Africans are scattered about their prison cell, lost in their despondency. But one African sits contentedly in a corner reading a Bible given by a missionary.

Cinque, the fearless leader, glumly looks over at his fellow captive, Yamba, and says, "You don't have to pretend to be interested in that. Nobody's watching but me."

But Yamba is authentically engrossed in the book. Momentarily, he glances up from it and says, "I'm not pretending. I'm beginning to understand it." Though the Bible is written in English, a language Yamba does not understand, its vivid illustrations speak to him.

Intrigued, Cinque scoots over to read the narrative depicted by the black-and-white sketches. Wanting to share what he has learned, Yamba begins to tell the story in their native tongue. "Their people have suffered more than ours." Referring to a picture of Jews being attacked by lions, he continues, "Their lives were full of suffering."

Yamba flips the page and eagerly points to a picture of the infant Jesus, crowned with a halo of light, "Then he was born and everything changed."

Cinque asks, "Who is he?"

Yamba doesn't know who the child is, but he knows that he must be special. Referring to a picture of Jesus haloed by the sun, riding on a donkey, and being praised by onlookers, Yamba tells Cinque, "Everywhere he goes, he is followed by the sun."

Yamba skips to other pictures of Jesus to prove his point. The celestial light engulfs him as he heals people with his hands, as he protects an outcast woman, as he embraces a mob

of children.

But this is not the end of the story. Yamba explains, “Something happened. He was captured, accused of some crime.”

Cinque shakes his head back and forth and insists, “He must have done something.”

Yamba says, “Why? What did we do?” Still gazing at the picture, Yamba asks, “Do you want to see how they killed him?”

Sensing Yamba’s emotional breakdown, Cinque reminds him, “This is just a story, Yamba.”

Yamba shakes his head in protest. This man’s death was real. With renewed enthusiasm he turns the page and joyfully explains to Cinque, “But look. That’s not the end of it. His people took his body down from...” Yamba pauses and draws a cross in the air.

Yamba says, “They took him into a cave. They wrapped him in cloth, like we do. They thought he was dead, but he appeared before his people again...and he spoke to them.” Peace settles over Yamba. Looking at Cinque he says, “Then, finally, he rose into the sky.”²

Even looking at the pictures in a Bible, Yamba understood that the gospel was about Jesus.

So, let us remember the gospel’s person. Let us remember the gospel’s power. Let us remember the gospel’s purpose. And let us remember the gospel’s promises.

Let us remember that it is the gospel which gives us strength for present and hope for the future. Amen.

² See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2006/september/13094.html>.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. <https://tampabaypresbyterian.org/SermonAudio>.
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