**How To Study the Bible**

**Pastoral Epistles**

**2 Timothy 2:8-13**

**What is the central focus of the gospel?**

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8 How do we go about “Remembering Jesus”?

The command to ‘remember Jesus Christ’ at first sight seems extraordinary. How could Timothy ever forget him? Yet the human memory is notoriously fickle: it is possible to forget even one’s own name! The epitaph over Israel’s grave was ‘they soon forgot’, and it was to overcome our forgetfulness of Christ crucified that he deliberately instituted his supper as a feast of remembrance, a fragrant ‘forget-me-not’. Even so the church has often forgotten Jesus Christ, absorbing itself instead now in barren theological debate, now in purely humanitarian activity, now in its own petty, parochial business.

How and why, then, are we to remember Christ? Essentially because he is the gospel, the heart of the good deposit. Indeed, Paul expresses it, he is the heart of ‘my gospel’, the gospel ‘not invented by me but entrusted to me’, like ‘my deposit’ (1:12). So then, if Timothy is to guard the deposit, and to hand it on faithfully to others, he must ‘remember Jesus Christ … as preached in my gospel’.

In particular, Christ is to be remembered as the one who is both ‘risen from the dead’ and ‘descended from David’. As we meditate on these two expressions, it is remarkable how full an account of the gospel they give. The birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus are all implicit in them. And these remind us both of his divine-human person and of his saving work.

First, his person. The words ‘descended from David’ imply his humanity, for they speak of his earthly descent from David. The words ‘risen from the dead’ imply his divinity, for he was powerfully designated God’s Son by his resurrection from the dead.

Secondly, his work. The phrase ‘risen from the dead’ indicates that he died for our sins and was raised to prove the efficacy of his sinbearing sacrifice. The phrase ‘descended from David’ indicates that he has established his kingdom as great David’s greater Son (*cf*. Lk. 1:32, 33). Taken together, the two phrases seem to allude to his double role as Saviour and King.

There is another reason why Timothy must ‘remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David’. It is not just because these facts constitute the gospel which Timothy must preach, but because they also illustrate, from Jesus Christ’s own experience, the principle that death is the gateway to life and suffering the path to glory. For he who died rose from the dead, and he who was born in lowliness as David’s seed is now reigning in glory on David’s throne. Both expressions set forth in embryonic form the contrast between humiliation and exaltation.

‘So then, Timothy,’ the apostle seems to be saying, ‘when you are tempted to avoid pain, humiliation, suffering or death in your ministry, remember Jesus Christ and think again!’[[1]](#footnote-2)

8b-9 What does Paul mean by “This is my gospel, for which I am suffering”?

Paul is suffering for the gospel. He is having to endure the painful indignity of wearing chains ‘like a common criminal’ (neb)—the only other occurrence of the word in the New Testament is of the criminals crucified with Jesus (Lk. 23:32, 33)—although he is a Roman citizen and an innocent man. But, though he is chained, God’s word is not. Even he himself at his first defense had been given the opportunity and the strength fully to proclaim God’s word to the court, as he will later explain to Timothy in greater detail (4:16, 17). In addition, God’s word could spread (was spreading) through many others, and in particular Timothy must share increasingly in this work.

The relation between Paul’s sufferings and the effectiveness of the gospel is not just one of contrast, however: ‘I am chained; God’s word is not.’ It is actually one of cause and effect: ‘Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain … salvation.’ We notice in passing that the doctrine of election does not dispense with the necessity of preaching. On the contrary, it makes it essential. For Paul preaches and suffers for it (literally) ‘in order that’ they ‘may obtain the salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory’. The elect obtain salvation in Christ not apart from the preaching of Christ but by means of it.

Further, it is not just the preaching but also the resultant suffering which are the means of the elect’s salvation. Paul’s statement that in some sense the salvation of others is secured by his sufferings may at first astonish us. Yet it is so. Not of course that his sufferings have any redemptive efficacy like Christ’s, but that the elect are saved through the gospel and that he could not preach the gospel without suffering for it. It is another case of ‘glory through suffering’, the ‘eternal glory’ of the elect through the sufferings endured by the apostle.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Trustworthy saying?

Once again Paul shared another trustworthy saying. Typically, he used well-known hymns or folk wisdom which the readers recognized, in this instance, he used couplets written as contrasts: if this … then this. The first two couplets reinforced the theme of suffering as normative to Christian living, contrasting this present life with the eternal future. The second two couplets paired human failings and God’s response.

Knute Larson, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 284.

11 If we died, we live?

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Paul resounded the Christian doctrine of life from death: If we died with him, we will also live with him (see also Rom. 6:8). These words are reminiscent of Jesus when he said, “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.… The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:24–25).

When we identify with Christ through abiding trust, we die to sin, to the world, and to self. God then raises us to a new kind of life as part of his wonderful work of regeneration (Rom. 6:1–4; Gal. 2:20). But Paul also recognized that the glory of our resurrection comes in the future; we have yet to realize it fully. In this present life we still suffer the effects of a world dominated by death.

Knute Larson, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 284–285.

12a If we endure, we reign?

The second couplet provides a slightly different slant on the contrast between the difficulties of life now and the rewards to come: if we endure, we will also reign with him. Western Christianity has often adopted one of the most damaging values to true Christian faith—the pursuit of comfort and ease. Christ is frequently presented as the answer to our problems or the fulfillment of our needs. Yet Paul understood the Christian life as one of continual struggle, suffering, and hardship—to bring glory to Christ. Christ brings to the believer the supernatural ability to persist, to endure, and to respond with, joy and thanksgiving (Col. 1:10–12).

Knute Larson, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 285.

**12b. If we disown, he will disown?**

Paul’s tenor changed in the next set of couplets. Recalling the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:32–33, he wrote, if we disown him, he will also disown us. Paul had in mind those who profess Christ and then turn away, denying the faith they formerly claimed. Paul issued a warning that denial of Christ has eternally damning consequences.[[3]](#footnote-4)

13 If we are faithless, he is faithful?

But God is gracious when we are feeble. Paul offered this encouragement for the times when we fail: if we are faithless, he will remain faithful. If we belong to Christ, we are his completely. In the midst of difficulty, he holds on to us if we stumble. He lives within us, sharing his life with ours as we take from his life—and so he cannot disown himself.[[4]](#footnote-5)

So, what….

1. Remember Jesus, he alone is where victory is found!
2. Though we may suffer and even be silence/chained the word of God is not!
3. Finally, he is the author and finisher of our faith. We must not deny him!

*in verse 8 Paul exhorts Timothy to remember Jesus Christ as the risen Savior. The One Who descended from David as the prophecies foretold, says Paul, is the One whom I preach. Paul’s message is in continuity with the Old Testament. Paul could never forget Jesus, His remarkable death and resurrection (which is the good news; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1–4) and what He had done for him. That is the kind of ministry that he wished Timothy to pursue—one in which Jesus Christ is the goal and meaning of it all. He knew if Timothy did, he would be able to endure what lay ahead and that if he did not, he would fail to do so. Jesus was truly the Messiah. Timothy must never forget that fact.*

*Jay E. Adams, I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus, The Christian Counselor’s Commentary (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 60.*

Paul cannot help remarking again that he is suffering for the good news that he preached, even to the point of being chained to a guard with a manacle. But, as victory overcomes pathos, he virtually shouts the Word of God is not chained! He identified closely with the gospel, at times even calling it “*my* gospel,” yet he recognized that though God had used him in marvelous ways, he was not indispensable. And, now, as he was about to depart the earthly scene, he declares, half in joy and half in assuring Timothy, that there is no restraint on God’s Word. One thing that can never be done is to silence the voice of God heard in His Word[[5]](#footnote-6)

Quoting a piece of poetry or portion of a hymn that was true, Paul declared it trustworthy as he incorporated it into his letter, thus making it a part of God’s revelation (v. 11). The poetic portion is interesting. Echoing John’s words in Revelation 20, he makes it clear that those who are martyred for the faith would live (v. 11) and reign (v. 12) with Christ. In the first resurrection (that of the martyrs) this promise would be fulfilled (On this, see Revelation 20 and my book, The Time is at Hand). But those who deny Him in the time of trial, He will deny. And, though men may be unfaithful, you can depend wholly upon Him—He is faithful. There cannot be any doubt about this because it is impossible for Him to go back on His Word and thus deny himself (v. 13).

Timothy is to remind his congregation about these things. They too needed strengthening.

**I should?**

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I will!

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1. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus76ti2?ref=Bible.2Ti2.8&off=38&ctx=of+Christ+(verse+8)%0a~The+command+to+%E2%80%98reme), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 61–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus76ti2?ref=Bible.2Ti2.9&off=53&ctx=Paul+(verses+9%2c+10)%0a~Paul+is+suffering+fo), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 62–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Knute Larson, [*I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc73th?ref=Bible.2Ti2.12b-13&off=10&ctx=1%3a10%E2%80%9312).%0a2%3a12b%E2%80%9313.+~Paul%E2%80%99s+tenor+changed), vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Knute Larson, [*I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc73th?ref=Bible.2Ti2.12b-13&off=345&ctx=mning+consequences.%0a~But+God+is+gracious+), vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Jay E. Adams, [*I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/chrcnslcom75ti1comm?ref=Bible.2Ti2&off=5492&ctx=+of+God%E2%80%99s+promises.%0a~Paul+cannot+help+rem), The Christian Counselor’s Commentary (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)