

2nd Timothy 2:8-13

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David — that is my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11 The saying is sure: 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 will also deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself.

Traditionally it has been thought that this pastoral letter to Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul. He is portrayed as being in chains and imprisoned for spreading the gospel. Authorities are able to stop him from traveling but they cannot stop the spread of the gospel. It is when he was chained and in prison that he maintained a positive attitude and wrote words of encouragement. He is able to do this because of his attitude. He is empowered by the Lord and sees that the Lord's suffering and death leads to victory. Therefore, he knew that his own suffering was something to celebrate because he was suffering for God's glory and his suffering was nothing compared to God's glory.

The main point that the author makes is to remember Jesus Christ. In this case, the word "remember" means a lot more than the way we typically associate the word. Remember who he is, what he said, and the life that he lived. To remember Jesus is to focus on Jesus and to live a Christ centered life. Your purpose, drive, direction, and meaning of life is to be one that is lived out as taught by Jesus. Remember Jesus is raised from the dead. Remember that Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected. What the world sees as the worst thing is suffering and death. What we see in suffering and death is glory. Suffering and death are not the worst thing. We have the best-case scenario; Jesus leads us through the suffering to glory and Jesus leads us through death to glory. For the world there is the fear of death and there is anxiety, struggle, depression associated with death. For the Christian there is hope that death is not the end. The hope comes from a promise that comes from one that never breaks a promise. Jesus leads us through the suffering that comes with life and saves us.

This past Tuesday was feast day for St. Francis of Assisi. Feast day is a Christian tradition to celebrate a saint. He set out to imitate Christ and carry out the Lord's work. He had some followers and he had one rule for them. "Follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and walk in his footsteps." That was the one and only rule. To live your life after the life and lessons of Jesus. With this as your rule, you go through life and your focus is to be on Jesus Christ. Being like Jesus is the essence of your inner being, it's who you are, it's your worldview, your identity.

Timothy had options. He could deny Christ, abandon the gospel, avoid any potential persecution, live by the ways of the world, and fall into temptation. Or he could stand firm and endure suffering. The Apostle Paul faced the same temptations. He chose to stand firm and endure suffering for the Lord's sake. He knows that there is reason to celebrate. Suffering has a positive meaning; it is part of the plan of salvation and goes with eternal glory. Even while he was a prisoner he witnessed because his allegiance was to God and his obedience was to God over humans. So, his encouragement to Timothy

was to be strong and teach others to be strong. The Apostle Paul can teach it because he has lived it. His encouragement for Timothy is also encouragement for us.

The lesson is one of faithful endurance. Timothy is to remain faithful during difficult times. The Apostle Paul remained faithful in the face of suffering and death. Jesus remained faithful no matter what human beings did to him. The lesson for us is to remember Jesus and remain faithful to God no matter what other human beings are doing to you. The gospel spreads by our faithful endurance; our ability to remember and follow Christ when the world around us does not.

Christians are called to be like Christ; to be like a soldier that is dedicated to following the leader, to be like an athlete that will win by following the rules, and to be like a farmer that toils over the crops. God's response to apostasy is to have mercy on those who stray and reward those who stand firm. So, remember Jesus, remember the lessons that he taught, remember the actions that he took, and remember his suffering, death, and resurrection.