Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Motives for Sacrificial Ministry, Part 2
Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:10-14a
Code: 55-8

As you know, we're studying 2 Timothy chapter 2 and looking at verses 8 through 13. I want to briefly remind you for the sake of those who haven't been with us in our study that Paul is writing this his last epistle to his son in the faith Timothy. Timothy has reached a low point apparently in his spiritual life and ministry. He is in danger of being ashamed of the Lord and ashamed of Paul. He is failing to use his gift as he ought to. He's feeling the pressure of persecution from the elders of the church at Ephesus who have defected from the faith and whom he is trying to correct. He is also feeling some animosity and rejection from the congregation at the church at Ephesus because they're living in ungodliness and he must set them right. He definitely feels the heat of the Roman Empire as it moves to persecute Christians. Paul who writes him is in prison at the time of his writing and awaiting his own execution. And Timothy knows that could come to him.

The ministry has not been easy. Timothy is young. He is naturally timid. He has his own sins to deal with. He tends to be a little bit weak in some areas of defending the faith against some high powered philosophy. And so he's really struggling. It would be a time in his life when he's looking for sympathy, a time when he's crawling into a corner and expecting somebody to come in the corner and soothe his brow and give him a cold drink and pat him a little bit and endeavor to sort of raise his sense of worth. It's a time in his life when he's licking his wounds. There may be a little bit of a "poor me" mentality, even self pity may have sort of overwhelmed him because of the difficulty.

And in that situation he is confronted by the Apostle Paul who doesn't give him sympathy at all, but rather gives him strength. He says, in effect, what you need, Timothy, is not sympathy for the difficulty of your situation, what you need is strength for the difficulty of your situation. And this is not the first time such an infusion of strength into a waning servant has taken place. In fact, as I was sitting back thinking about that, I was reminded of an amazing and beautiful passage of Scripture in Jeremiah which is a very good parallel. So let's begin by looking at Jeremiah chapter 11.

To give you a little bit of background about Jeremiah, Jeremiah was unquestionably the greatest religious and righteous personality in Israel in his day. He was the supreme example of godliness in his time. He did not have a happy life. He would have been a very poor advertisement for the prosperity gospel. His entire life was a life of sorrow and sadness and pain and persecution. He was a very unique character. He was born a priest but called to be a prophet. His sufferings were more poignant and painful and more long-lasting than any other Old Testament prophet. His life could be characterized, really, as one long martyrdom. And, in fact, if God hadn't spared him and the text of

Jeremiah says this, he would have died again and again. Perhaps a thousand times he would have died, so hated, despised and rejected was he by the people to whom he spoke.

He ministered for about forty years. The whole forty years in sorrow. The people were apostate. They wanted nothing to do with his condemning confronting message which called them to holiness and called them to repentance. They didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to listen to it. They wanted to shut Jeremiah up. At times he felt as if God had forsaken him. He cursed the day that he was born because of the unending and unmitigated sorrow that he bore. One of the kings who reigned during his tenure as prophet, Jehoiakim, was so angry with what he said that he took the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecy, cut it in pieces and then burned it. Jeremiah became a fugitive from the king's wrath. Jeremiah ultimately ended up imprisoned. He had far more opposition cumulatively than any other Old Testament prophet. He suffered greatly.

Part of it was due to the fact that his message was always a message of unconditional commitment to God. He stressed nothing but total abandonment to the service of Jehovah. He called for complete surrender. And because of that ultimately tradition says he was stoned to death. He faced persecution upon persecution. Suffering, pain, he endured incredible trials, he endured rejection, he was sorrowful all of the time so that he became known and is still known as the weeping prophet. In his prophecy he talks about how he could wish that his eyes were like a fountain so they could pour out water in weeping for the destruction of his people who were facing the judgment of God.

As we come to chapter 11 and the end of the chapter, one of the many sorrows in the life of Jeremiah takes place. He was originally from a town of Anathoth. And now we read in verse 21 that the men of the town he came from, his own friends, his own familiar friends, those who were a part of his life were seeking his life and they were saying, "Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord that you might not die at our hand." In other words, Jeremiah's own townspeople were saying if you don't stop this condemning prophecy, we're going to take your life, we're going to kill you.

And so, here is Jeremiah, righteous, godly, virtuous, faithful in proclaiming the truth and never relieved from an incessant life of trials and suffering and persecution. And now when it comes to the point where even the people from his own home town are after his life if he doesn't silence his message, he's had about all that he can take and he cries out to the Lord and his prayer is recorded in the first four verses of chapter 12. Listen to what he says. "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, that I would plead my case with Thee."

Now he goes to the Lord recognizing that God does right and says, "I want to plead my case to You, You're a righteous God." "Indeed," he says, "I would discuss matters of justice with Thee." I want to talk about what's fair, God. And the underlying attitude is what's happening to me, frankly, isn't fair. "Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?" Why are all the wicked having it so good and I am so faithful and my life is so filled with sorrow? It just

doesn't fit. You're a just God. And so, in a sense, he storms the gates of heaven with a holy familiarity. He's not accusing God of anything, he's just pleading with God. He's concerned that the wicked are prospering and in contrast to that he tells God about his own heart, verse 3, "But You know me, O Lord, You see me and You examine my heart's attitude toward You, You know the difference between what I am and what they are. And how is it that they prosper and I, in a sense, perish? You know my heart, You know I'm no hypocrite while they deal in treachery...as he said in verse 1 and in verse 2...You planted them, they took root, they grow, they've even produced fruit. You are near to their lips but far from their minds." I'm true and they're false, I'm genuine and they're hypocritical, but I'm suffering and they're prospering. He's really under the pain of his persecution. He's enduring with great difficulty. And what he wants out of God is some sympathy.

"The wicked," verse 4 says, "are even mocking God." Jeremiah says, "How long is the land to mourn and the vegetation of the countryside to wither for the wickedness of those who dwell in it? Animals and birds have been snatched away because men have said, He will not see our latter ending." In other words, they're mocking God...we can do anything we want, we can devastate this land, we can act in any way we want, God will never see the end of it. In other words, they're denying the omniscience of God, that He knows everything. They're mocking God.

And so, Jeremiah says, "Lord, how can You deal with these wicked mocking hypocrites and allow them to prosper while I'm in an incessant condition of suffering?" And frankly that's not a question that has not since been asked by those who serve the Lord God and endured the same kind of seeming incongruity. I mean, I think there have been times in my life when I confess to you that I've asked the same question. "Lord, why is it that I always seem to be struggling through things and other people seem to have so few struggles? Why is it that others are not persecuted while we who preach the truth are accused of all kinds of things that aren't true?" I mean, that's only a minor thing compared to what Jeremiah endured. But any servant of God who goes through the low point of suffering on a prolonged basis is going to cry out to God in a prayer not unlike this..."Lord, how is it that this fits in with Your justice?"

So, Jeremiah wants some sympathy. And he's kind of pleading for it. He's impatient. He would like his suffering to end and he would like things to be reversed. God's answer is very interesting. God doesn't give him sympathy. In fact, just the opposite. In effect God says to him. "You think you've suffered, you ain't seen nothing yet." Just the opposite of what he wanted to hear. Look at verse 5, he had just said You ought to slaughter all these wicked people, at the end of verse 3, and You ought to set them up for a day of carnage. But on the other hand, look at verse 5, God says, "If you have run...and you ought to circle verses 5 and 6, they're fascinating, put a mark by them...if you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses?" What a statement.

You say, "What in the world is He saying to him?" Here is this poor beleaguered battered and bruised prophet who crawls up somewhere in a moment of silent meditation and cries out to God and says, "I cannot take anymore of this. I have a pure heart. I am living to Your glory. I'm trying to do it right. I'm preaching the truth and I am literally being killed all the day long," to borrow Pauline terminology. "On the other hand, the unrighteous who hate You, who use Your name, it's near their lips but who do not care about You at all, they're hypocritical and they ought to be slaughtered like sacrificial animals in a day of carnage are prospering all over the place. Lord, I'm getting a little impatient, how about some sympathy?" And the Lord's answer is...Hey, if you can't run with the footmen and not get tired, what are you going to do when you've got to run with the horses? In other words, Jeremiah, rather than being so consumed by this particular effort, you better realize that the worst is yet to come. You're only running with the footmen now.

I don't know how it would be, I've never tried to race a horse. I've raced a lot of human beings in my life, but I've never tried to race a horse. But I remember watching on television one time a man who thought he could race a horse and win. That man was a fool. And that's essentially behind this imagery here. Jeremiah, if you can't handle the difficulty of running with the footmen, what are you going to do when I bring out the horses and make you run against them? The idea is it's going to get worse. And what Jeremiah needs is not sympathy, what he needs is greater...what?...strength...greater strength.

And then He says to him also in verse 5, "If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?" That's most fascinating. Down by the Jordan River in ancient times before the denuding that we now have seen take place throughout history that has basically skinned the land, down at the Jordan River it was thick with growth. And it was the place where the wild beasts occupied themselves and lived. And what He is saying to Jeremiah is, "Look, if you cannot stand up and hold your ground in a land of peace, what are you going to do when you get caught in a jungle?" metaphorically. What in the world are you going to do when you get in the thicket with the wild beasts? You haven't seen anything yet. You're just learning how to endure.

Boy, what a statement! But that's so instructive for us. And he talks about brothers in the household and those who are close to him dealing treacherously with him, crying against him. In other words, the people closest to you reject you and hate you. If you can't handle that, you'll never be able to handle what's to come. Instead of sympathy he gets a call to strength. And that is precisely what Paul is doing. Now let's go back to 2 Timothy.

Timothy is kind of folding up under the pressure and Paul is saying to him, to borrow Jeremiah's concept, to "Hey, Timothy, if you can't run with the footmen, what are you going to do when the horses come? If you can't stand up in a land of peace before the heat is really on, what are you going to do when you get caught in the thicket with the wild beasts?" This is a call to strength to a young man who is not unlike a Jeremiah, a spokesman for God in a time of trouble.

Timothy is facing trials. He's facing persecution. And he's whimpering like Jeremiah whimpered and he wants to be pampered and he wants to be stroked and instead the Apostle Paul calls for strength. He calls for courage. He calls for him not to be ashamed. He calls for him to be properly committed, to be a soldier and an athlete, and a hard-working farmer. He calls for him to teach the Word of God no matter what happens. And here in verses 8 to 13 he gives him the motives that underlie the fulfilling of that call.

I was reading a sermon by Hugh Black who was one of the great Scottish preachers of a century past. He was looking at the church in this sermon and looking at its suffering. And he wrote this, "Christ's church has survived through her power to endure. She was willing to give up anything to hold her ground, willing to pour out blood-like water in order to take root. The mustard seed planted with tears and watered with blood stood the hazard of every storm, gript tenaciously the soil, twining its roots around the rocks, reared its head a little higher and spread out its branches a little fuller. And when the tempest came held on for very life and then never hastening, never resting went on in the divine task of growing and at last became the greatest of trees, giving shelter to the birds of the air in its wide-spreading branches. So is the Kingdom of heaven," says Black, "it is a true parable of the church. She conquered violence not by violence but by virtue. She overcame force not by force but by patience. Her sons were ready to die, to die daily. It was given unto them not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for His sake, Philippians 1:29. They would not be stamped out. When their persecutors thought they were scattered like chaff, it turned out they were scattered like seed. The omnipotent power of Rome was impotent before such resolution. The battle not the barracks is the place to make soldiers. The church met the Empire and broke it through the sheer power to endure. She was willing to suffer and to suffer and to suffer and afterward to conquer," end quote.

Scattered like chaff but it turned out to be seed. You're here today because believers were willing to endure. And they have endured and endured and endured and endured through all the centuries. And they endure even today. I was reading yesterday about the church in Romania. The president of Romania, Nicolai Kosesque(?) who heads up the Communist government was being discussed in this article and it said the Romanian communist government violates virtually every area of human rights. Religious believers, particularly evangelicals, are targets of abuse. Churches have been bulldozed, Bibles have been confiscated pulped and turned into toilet paper. Believers are not permitted to evangelize and some groups are not permitted to assemble. Religious activists have been imprisoned, beatened, and tortured and still the church goes on because there are those godly people who will endure anything. They can run with the footmen and they can run with the horses. They can stand true in the day of peace in the land of peace and they can survive in the thicket of the Jordan. And it's on those kinds of people that Christ has built His church. All the rest are sort of along to benefit from the sacrifice of the few.

Jesus, of course, set the original example of that kind of devotion. "Consider Him," the writer of Hebrews says in 12:3, "who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. Consider Christ and what He endured without growing weary before you let yourself grow weary in the battle." Thank God for a courageous church. Thank God for those who are willing to understand what it was to be a disciple, that being a disciple as, Jesus said, meant leaving everything, facing persecution. In Matthew chapter 10 verses 24, 25, that section there, he says, "You don't expect the servant to be above his master and you don't expect the teacher to be above...the student rather to be above his teacher," and the implication is if the teacher and the master are persecuted, so will the student be and so will the servant be. Persecution is to be expected. You need to be ready for that. You need to be willing for that. You need to not lose heart. In that same tenth chapter he says, "Do not fear" three times. Do not fear. Why? Because your God knows, your God cares, your God oversees, your God will vindicate you in the end. That's your calling.

The call then to endurance is part of the call to discipleship. Jesus in the same passage says you may have to say goodbye to father, mother, sister, brother. You may be set at variance, after all I came not to bring peace but a sword, to cut a family in half, animosity and persecution may come right out of a family. You must make very personal sacrifices. They may even involve taking up a cross, they surely will involve denying yourself, losing your own life in order that you may find it. All of that kind of teaching. You read of the heroes of the faith in Hebrews chapter 11 who endured all kinds of conceivable persecution and then he says, "Of whom the world was not worthy." So that the life of the church has been built on those who were able to endure.

Now the point of all of this is to call Timothy and us to that endurance. And that has to come from deep within a person. Something has to be motivating us more than our own well-being. If you're looking for your own well-being, you're not going to endure any persecution. More than your own comfort, if you're looking for your own comfort you won't endure persecution. More than your own prosperity, success, reputation, fame, or whatever. If you are the issue then you will compromise whatever has to be compromised to gain whatever you want for you. That's the way it is. But those who are willing to give their life and to give their whole energies toward the service of Christ and endure whatever comes along, those people have a higher agenda. They're motivated by something other than themselves. And that's what we want to talk about this morning.

What motivates one to endure? What is to motivate Timothy? Well let's remember what we said last week. The first thing that Paul says must motivate you is the preeminence of the Lord, verse 8. "Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, descendant of David according to my gospel." In other words, remember the Lord of the gospel. Remember who you serve. Remember who you preach. Remember for whom you live. I mean, if you are self-consumed then you're going to be compromising, you're going to be avoiding conflict, you're going to not want to get into confrontation, you won't speak the truth, you'll hedge it so you don't offend because it's you you're worried about. I

mean, you're in the office and you know you ought to speak a word for Christ, the moment is perfect, it's the exact time to do it, or you're in your family gathering and they're about to do something you know is wrong, you should confront that lovingly in the name of Christ. You know it's time for you to speak the gospel in a given situation, you know you ought to tell your boss who is about to do something that's illegal and unfair and you ought to tell him that it's wrong and that God is dishonored by that. But you back up. Why? Because you're concerned more about you than you are the cause of Christ.

So what Paul is saying here to Timothy is, people who endure without compromise are not self-preservationists. Daniel is a classic illustration. He was willing to endure the lion's den rather than to compromise his commitment of worship to the true and living God. John Bunyan said, "I have loved my Lord and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, I have covenanted to put my own also." I want to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and he endured without compromise. So you remember who you serve. The preeminent Lord has the preeminent cause. And if you remember Jesus Christ, the risen living Christ, the Christ of the gospel and that you serve Him, that is a high and constraining motivation.

In the eleventh century there was a hymn penned most likely by Bernard of Clairvaux who was somewhat mystic but nonetheless a devoted follower of Jesus Christ and one who endured a tremendous amount of suffering in his life. He wrote these lovely and heart-searching words that are familiar to many of us, "Jesus, the very thought of Thee with sweetness fills my breast, but sweeter far Thy face to see and in Thy presence rest. No voice can sing, no heart can frame, nor can the memory find a sweeter sound than Thy blessed name, O Savior of mankind. O hope of every contrite heart, O joy of all the meek, to those who ask how kind Thou art, how good to those who seek. But what to those who find, Ah this, nor tongue nor pen can show the love of Jesus what it is none but His loved ones know." And then this, "Jesus, our only joy be Thou, as Thou our prize wilt be, in Thee be all our glory now, and through eternity." Now that's the idea, to live for Christ, to be consumed with the sweetness of Christ.

We sung it this morning. "When morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries, may Jesus Christ be praised." And if that's really what your heart awaking in the morning cries, that controls your life.

In 1943, December, eleven missionaries were martyred on the Isle of Pines in the Philippines, martyred for the cause of Christ. One of them was a Dr. Francis Rose. Sometime prior to that martyrdom he had written these magnificent words to express his commitment to Christ against persecution: "All human progress up to God has stained the stairs of time with blood. For every gain for Christendom is bought by someone's martyrdom. For us He poured the crimson cup and bade us take and drink it up, Himself He poured to set us free, help us, O Christ, to drink with Thee. Ten thousand saints came thronging home from lion's den and catacomb, the fire and sword and beast defied for Christ their King they gladly died. With eye of faith we see today that cross-led column wind

its way up life's repeated Calvary, we rise, O Christ, to follow Thee." It's a wonderful association to belong to, frankly, those who live for the preeminence of Christ.

And that's what Timothy must understand. He must know that he serves the Lord Christ who is most worthy and therefore whose cause is the worthiest of all.

Secondly, last time we saw that motive comes not only in the preeminence of the Lord but motive for suffering in our ministry comes from the power of the Word, verse 9. At the end of verse 9 you remember after talking of his own imprisonment, he said, "But the Word of God is not imprisoned, not bound." And so Paul says I understand that I can move ahead and though they take me and put me in jail, the Word of God will go forth. So there's no need to feel like a preservationist. You don't have to guard your life or protect your reputation or make sure nobody's ever offended because you might lose your freedom. Listen, preach boldly, Paul says, don't worry about what happens, they may put you in jail, they may take your life but the Word of God is not bound. That's so wonderful.

We can speak the truth. We can speak it boldly. We can speak it forthrightly. We can say what ought to be said, what has to be said for the glory of Christ and not fear any repercussions no matter how antagonistic the society may be because even if we're imprisoned the Word of God is not bound.

That brings us to our two final points for today. We are motivated in sacrificial service to Christ because of His preeminence, because of the power of His Word and thirdly, the purpose of the work. Notice verse 10, so basic. And Paul is rather explicit here, very direct. "For this reason, dia(?), on account of this, I endure all things." Now here is his reason. Why do you endure all this? Why do you allow yourself to go through all of this? Well, I endure all of this for the sake of those who are chosen. Who are they? Well that's the elect. I endure, the word means to remain under suffering, all things relates to hardship, sacrifice, persecution, chains, prison, all that kind of stuff. I endure all of that continually. I continually endure it all for the sake of those who are chosen, the elect.

And again we are reminded, beloved, and we cannot escape it, that God identifies people who have been chosen for salvation from before the foundation of the world as the chosen ones, the elect. Paul says the reason I'm willing to give my life is for the sake of the elect. You say, "Well now wait a minute. Why do you need to be giving your life in regard to the elect if they're the elect? Won't God save them? Why don't you just back up and say...Whoa, I don't need to get involved in this deal, these people are elect, they're going to get saved anyway? I'm not going to put my neck on the line." I mean, if all we had was a one-sided, lop-sided doctrine of election, it would be an excuse for all of us to do absolutely what? Nothing. We just say, "Well, whoever is going to be saved, that's chosen by God, Ephesians 1, you know, 4, 5, 6, that whole passage, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, predestined in love to be adopted as sons, all done by the free choice of God, nothing of ours. You know." We could say, "Well, since we're all elect, and we're chosen by God, and He's done that before the world began, and our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the

foundation of the world, as it says in Revelation a couple of places, we sure don't need to get uptight about evangelism. I mean, why am I going to be a martyr if they're going to get saved anyway, right?"

That's pretty fair thinking, reasonably logical. And so he adds this most important statement in verse 9, "For which I suffer hardship, even to imprisonment as a criminal, the Word of God is not imprisoned for this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen in order that...that's a hina with a subjunctive which is a direct purpose clause...in order that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."

Why do you do what you do, Paul? Because I want to reach the elect. Why do you want to reach the elect? In order that they may obtain what they've been elected to obtain. The point is this, God has chosen them to be saved but God also gives us this incredible privilege of being the human agency by which the saving gospel is brought to their hearts. That's the issue.

So what compels Paul is not that he is responsible to save people. God forbid. But that he has the high and holy privilege to be the instrument by which God saves people.

Long ago, years ago, and I suppose this has been asked to me a couple of times, but I remember one lady said to me one time and she was somewhat uninitiated, we were talking about a certain meeting and she said, "Well did you save anybody?" You know, when someone says that to me, I just...that's a very...that's not the way you put the question, but anyway that's the way she put it. I've never saved anybody in my life. Nobody on the face of the earth has ever come to Jesus Christ as a direct result of the effectiveness of John MacArthur. Anybody who comes to Christ comes to Christ because God in His incredible and marvelous and gracious power draws them, right? Jesus said, "No man comes unto Me except the Father draws him." And so no one has ever been saved because of John MacArthur but John MacArthur has had the wonderful privilege of being the agent God has used when He set out to save someone. And that's the issue. It's the privilege. We could even say for the sake of the privilege involved Paul is willing to suffer. It's incredible.

Now people may be elect but the other side of it, they have to obtain the salvation to which they are chosen. So there is an obtaining here and they obtain it how? How do you obtain salvation? "For by grace are you saved through faith..." that's the act of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and following Him. And so you call people to obtain that salvation.

I tell you this, folks. I was saying this to someone recently that if I believed for a moment that people were saved by the effectiveness of my sermons, I would be in an insane asylum because I couldn't live with the guilt of ineffective sermons. If I believed that people were in the Kingdom of God because of my cleverness or my power in preaching, I would be a basket case because I would feel responsible for people being damned because the week they came here I wasn't very good. I mean, I wouldn't want to live with that. But I don't believe for one moment that anybody will be in heaven or

hell because of John MacArthur. They will be in heaven because they are elect by God in His sovereign grace and I have this tremendous privilege to be the spokesman for the consummation of that elective purpose when they obtain the salvation which has inherent in it eternal glory. What a privilege...what a calling...what a lofty purpose for your life. And so, instead of having to live with some kind of frenzied mind, fearing that people are being damned because I'm not good enough, I have the privilege of living a kind of joyous life that says even though I'm utterly inadequate, God in His infinite grace not only redeems people but uses me as a vessel to do that. Boy, what a thought.

And that's what's in the heart of Paul here. He says, "I'll endure anything for the sake of those that are chosen in order that they also may come by faith to obtain that for which they have been chosen, namely the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." What a statement. And there is salvation in no other name, right? Acts 4:12, "Neither is there given any other name whereby you must be saved." None other name under heaven and the name Jesus Christ. Salvation here comes exclusively in Christ Jesus. No one will ever enter the Kingdom of God, the presence of God, eternal life or heaven apart from the salvation provided in Christ Jesus.

Just think about what your life is for. And then look at your life very honestly. What do you do with your life? What do you see as your highest goal? Move up the corporate ladder? Get a better job? Make more money? Buy your camper? Go on a longer vacation? Get new furniture for the living room? Paint the house? Buy a new house? What are your objectives in life? Can you think of anything higher as an objective than to be used by the eternal God as an agent by which He brings the obtaining of eternal salvation to one who is chosen in Him before the foundation of the world? What a lofty calling. I mean, that puts ministry in perspective. That's what we're all about. What a thrill.

Yes, salvation from God's viewpoint is through election. From man's viewpoint there must be an obtaining by faith. And we can be the instrument.

In Romans 10, do you remember the wonderful wonderful statement, "Whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved?" Remember that? Verse 13, listen to 14, "But how then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a...what?...a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? And no wonder it is written how beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things." What a wonderful calling. Whoever calls will be saved but how they going to call if they don't hear, how they going to hear if they don't send a preacher? That's basic.

So, his sufferings have an evangelistic purpose. The fact that God is using his preaching to save the elect enables him to endure anything...anything. What a thrilling calling. This is the preacher's joy, beloved. This is the preacher's joy.

I was reading again this week about some of the preachers of the past, John Wesley, he parted company with ease early in his ministry. He parted company with money all the time in his ministry, he lived very simply on little and gave away nearly everything he had. He said, "I also leave my reputation where I left my soul, in the hands of God," because he was continually maligned in his day. John Wesley traveled by foot or horseback 225 thousand miles, preached over 2400 sermons that we know of, amid misrepresentation, abuse, never knowing the delights of love at home, subject to incessant attacks by the mobs, by other preachers, by the press, yet he never lost the joy of his service until he died at the age of eighty-eight. Because he always knew who he was serving and all the rest of the stuff was just a lot of falderal around at the foot and never really touched the heart. In fact, Ferrar(?) said, "To Wesley was granted the task which even an archangel might have envied."

It was said of George Whitfield, also God, of course, used him mightily here in America after He used him in England for years, in 34 years he crossed the Atlantic 13 times and preached 18,000 sermons. As a soldier of the cross he was humble, ardent, devote, put the whole armor of God on, preferring the honor of Christ to his own interest, his own repose, his own reputation or his own life. And William Calper wrote this in tribute to Whitfield, "He loved the world that hated him. The tear that dropped upon his Bible was sincere, assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife, his only answer was a blameless life."

And you'll be assailed, I know it. It happens to me all the time. Most recently I confronted another pastor in this area, I decided I needed to go and confront him face-to-face because he had decided to run an ad in the L.A. Times at least a half a page calling me a heretic. And I felt that I needed to confront that because not because I want to protect me but because I want to protect the honor of Christ. And the only argument you have against that kind of thing is like that man Calper said of Whitfield, the answer of a blameless life. You want to be sure that when you're slandered and persecuted, they have to make it up. They have to fabricate it because there isn't any truth that they can use against you.

And why would you be willing to endure all of that? Because the work is so incredibly marvelous. You have the privilege of being the agent of God to bring together sovereign election and human volition in the saving work. What a thought, what a privilege. Any man who understands the preeminence of the Lord, any woman who understands the power of the Word and the purpose of the work will be compelled to sacrificially serve in boldness for the cause of Christ. People say, "Well, I don't want to say anything, I might offend somebody." And what they do is take themselves out of the picture of being used by God and God brings someone else to reach that elect person. In the book of Acts God said to Paul, "You have to go into that city, I have much people there. Get in there, Paul, and be the instrument when I reach those elect."

Finally, the fourth point he makes to Timothy is you should be motivated by the promise of the reward. There's a reward coming and this is in verses 11 to 13. "It is a trustworthy statement if we died with Him we shall also live with Him, if we endure we shall also reign with Him, if we deny Him He will also deny us, if we are faithless He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself."

Now what does that mean? Well first of all it's a trustworthy saying, or a faithful saying. That little phrase, that little introductory phrase is used five times in the pastoral epistles and nowhere else in the New Testament. And apparently the best we can understand it, it was a way of introducing something that was axiomatic in the early church, that is something that was a truism that everybody knew and repeated, common knowledge. The church by the time Paul writes these epistles had developed a certain creed, had summarized its basic important doctrines and teachings. And so when Paul says this is a faithful saying and sometimes adds the phrase of "affirmation and worthy of all acceptance," he is referring to something that everybody knows, it's common knowledge. In this case, this trustworthy statement because it has such parallelism and such rhythm was probably a hymn. It probably was sung by the early church. We have similar things in other forms that have been found in other places than in the New Testament that would sort of verify that this was a common kind of hymn they sung.

Now remember the church had experienced some persecution. There was the reality of the animosity of the world very vivid in their minds. And this is the kind of faithful saying, or truism or axiom, the kind of hymn that they might commonly sing. If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him, if we endure, we shall also reign with Him. Now in the face of persecution that would be very comforting, wouldn't it? Very comforting. All these lines are first-class conditionals, that is they indicate that this is how it really is, if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. That aorist tense "if we died" views the action as a whole, if at any time we have or shall have died with Him, we will...in the future...live with Him. What he's talking about here is something that happens in time and something that happens in eternity. The contrast between the aorist and the future splits this thing into two different time zones...the present and the future. And so if we have died in the present and I take it that he has martyrdom in mind, if we go to the extent where we lose our life, in the future we'll live with Him. In other words, losing your life here simply means gaining your life there. You're just going into the presence of Christ. If for the cause of Christ you lose your life, the promise is you'll receive it right back in glory, you'll live with Him. Paul says it's far better to depart and be with Christ, absent from the body is present with the Lord, this was the hope that filled his heart. Jesus on the cross, "Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Stephen under the stones in Acts 7:59, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." If you die with Him, you live with Him. What a comfort.

Oh it may...it may have the implication also of Romans 6 that we who have died in Christ by faith also live and walk in newness of life. But I think the stronger sense is that he's talking here about martyrdom. And on the other hand he says in the beginning of verse 12, "If we endure, if we patiently endure persevering under trials," it's a present-active indicative, continual present endurance,

patience, if we keep on enduring, "we'll also reign with Him." Not all of us will be martyrs, some of us will just endure the persecution and if we do, we'll reign. And if we'll die we'll live with Him immediately.

So, think of the reward. So if you stick your neck out there and you're bold and you preach the truth of Jesus Christ and you wind up losing your life, you're going to live with Him. And if you give your life in the service of Christ and you endure persecution and animosity and bitterness and whatever else, realize that you may be under it now but you're going to be over it then. You may be submitting now but you're going to be in authority then, you're going to reign with Christ in His Kingdom. What a promise. The idea is that loyalty to Christ, endurance in persecution is rewarded with eternal glory, eternal reigning with Christ. Wonderful promise.

He already mentioned that eternal glory in verse 10 at the very end. And we may endure here but we are going to receive in the life to come, we're going to reign together with, that word is connected here with sum which is a preposition meaning together with. And so we're going to reign together with all the other believers who have likewise endured.

Now let me give you a little thought here before we go on, catch this. This is a statement not only about faithful service but about the perseverance of the saints. If you die with Christ, you'll live with Him. Why? Because in a sense if you have gone all the way to death in faithfulness to Christ, that's proof positive that you're a genuine Christian and you're going into His presence to live. On the other hand, you may not have died but if you've endured all the persecution, continually endured it and never abandoned the faith, then you're going to be one who demonstrates that you're a genuine believer who will reign forever with Christ. That's the perseverance of the saints.

How do you know a person's genuinely saved? They persevere. They go through the trials, the struggles, the persecutions, the difficulties, and they stay true to the Savior. Oh there are lapses, there are times when they're like Peter and they...they deny the Lord momentarily, but they go out and weep bitterly. And Peter, you remember, died eventually as a martyr true to the faith. The Lord told him he would and tradition says he did. No one is elect who doesn't endure. We are secure in our salvation from the divine side because God has chosen us and we are secure from the human side because by His power we persevere. All throughout the New Testament that doctrine of perseverance is taught. "If you continue in My Word, then are you My true disciple," John 8:31. First Corinthians says the same thing, chapter 15, I don't know if you remember how he starts out preaching the gospel, "Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, and which you also received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved if you hold fast the Word which I preached unless you believed in vain."

It's possible to believe for nothing. That's that easy believism. That's that "make a decision." I was talking to my Dad yesterday about this and we were discussing the fact that making a decision for

Christ is not a biblical term, the word "decision" doesn't even appear in the Scripture. Accepting Christ is not really used in Scripture. What the Scripture does in inviting a person to Christ is call them to be a follower of Jesus Christ. That's the issue. You don't say to someone, "Jesus died and Jesus rose again and He wants to change your life. If you just accept Him He'll change your life." That's simply a short-term kind of thing, you just do this and you'll get that. That is a very confusing thing and that kind of evangelism, I think, has produced a lot of still-births. What we should say to people is if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose again, if you believe that He's the Savior who paid the penalty for your sin, if you believe that He desires to forgive you and you are willing to follow Him in obedience and live to His glory, then come and follow Christ. We should be calling people to discipleship, not to decisions. We should be calling people to follow Christ, not accept Christ. And we see here again that you will reign if you continue under persecution faithful to Christ, if you're a follower. No one is elect who does not endure.

So he says you may die. But if you die you'll live with Him. On the other hand, if you endure, the fact that you have endured proves that you're genuine and you will reign with Him. Colossians 1, do you remember verses 21 to 23? It says you were formerly alienated, hostile in your mind and He's reconciled you in His fleshly body through death. And then it says this in verse 23, "If indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel." See, if you continue faithful. If you're a follower of Christ.

So he says there on the first point, if you're going to die you're going to live with Him, and if you have to endure it all, that's all right, in the end you'll reign with Christ. That's the reward. Oh what a wonderful thing.

But on the other hand, he doesn't stop there. He gives us the whole faithful saying, he gives us the whole verse out of the hymn, notice it, verse 12, "On the other hand, if we deny Him, He also will deny us and if we are unbelieving, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself." If we deny Him, future tense, if some time in the future, now we name His name, Oh yes we believe, but sometime in the future under persecution, stress, difficulty, we deny Christ, that one...emphatically...that one, that is Christ Himself will also deny us. The word means to reject or disown or renounce. He'll reject you.

In Acts 3:13 it's used when it says, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up and disowned in the presence of Pilate." In other words, it's used of the rejection of the Jews against Jesus Christ when they took Him to Pilate. That's what it means, to disown, to denounce, to reject. It is used in Titus 1:16, "They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him." It is a word with reference to rejection. Some people who profess but then reject, that's its use there in Titus 1:16. For a while it all sounds good, it sounds like they really believe, but they deny. It's the same word used in 2 Peter 2 verse 1 of those who name the name of Christ but deny the Master who bought them. On the one hand they claim to be teachers representing Him, but on the other hand they truly deny Him.

So, if you deny Him somewhere along the line, like the rocky soil kind of people, there's a little bit of life there, and all of a sudden when the persecution begins and the trouble comes, and there's a price to pay, you reject Christ, you wither, you die. The one who continually then carries on that denial...oh there may be moments like Peter's moment when your words come out and you deny what you know to be true, and you repent and you go on believing. But when you come to a point in your life where even having named the name of Christ you move into a mode that goes on denying Him and disowning and renouncing and rejecting Him, He'll deny you, He'll renounce and reject and disown you. That's what it says. And that is taken, by the way, right out of Matthew 10. Can I read it to you because I want you to make the connection? Matthew 10:32, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."

In other words, this is where, no doubt, the thought of the Apostle Paul is drawn from. There are those people who faithfully continue to confess their belief in Christ and there are those who deny. The ones who are faithful to confess, He will confess. The ones who are unfaithful and deny, He also will deny. They are the Demases of the world who having loved this world forsake Christ. They are those like the disciples in John 6 who follow Jesus for a little while and then walk no more with Him. And so he says if in the process of persecution you back out, deny Christ, walk away, it proves you never were genuine and the Lord will deny you and maybe some day you'll hear, "Depart from Me, I never knew you," even though you may say, "Lord, Lord," in the day of judgment.

And then lastly he says, the second parallel of the unbelievers, if we are unbelieving, you come to the place of faithlessness and unbelief and it's a continual state, that one, again emphatic, Christ Himself will remain faithful. He cannot deny Himself. You may have named the name of Christ but now you come to be disbelieving. I know many people like that...many people, people I grew up with who today reject Christ. We do not believe in Jesus Christ, we've rejected the whole thing. They are unbelieving.

Well I'll tell you what, they may not have been faithful to their promise to Christ, but Christ will be faithful to His promise to them. And what was His promise to them? That if you're an unbeliever you'll be damned. So when it says "He remains faithful, He cannot deny Himself," it means you will come under the judgment that a just God will bring because that's the way He keeps His Word. You have a denial of Christ in the third statement and you have unbelief in the fourth, two negatives to go with the two positives of dying with Him and enduring.

What does it mean to continue in unbelief? Well it's the word apiste, it means to not believe. It's in the sense of continual unbelief and he is saying you may name the name of Christ then you fall into unbelief, you go on in that unbelief and the Lord will not be unfaithful like you were, He'll be faithful to His word and His word says that such unbelief is punished by eternal judgment. And we are, John 3

says, condemned because we believe not. Any less and He would cease to be God. God's going to carry out His threats. I'll tell you, He's going to carry out His threats. And if He said He would judge unbelief, that's exactly what He'll do, He'll judge unbelief. And unbelievers will be condemned as He said they would be condemned.

Oh this is very strong. That little trustworthy statement, that little hymn that comes out of the early church points up the future. And he is saying you serve Christ with all your heart. Why? Because you're willing to die with Him that you may live with Him, because you're willing to endure with Him that you may reign with Him. The other alternative is somewhere along the line you begin to deny Christ and if that pattern keeps up it shows an unregenerate heart and He'll deny you. You fall into a period of prolonged unbelief where you reject the truth, and He will remain faithful to what He's going to do to unbelievers.

So think about your reward. If you're a true Christian and you're faithful to the Lord, you have the promise of that eternal life, the promise of that eternal reigning. And in the light of that promise you can serve in this life and endure anything, even death because it means life and endurance because it will be transformed into glory.

How could we do less than give everything to Christ when we understand the preeminence of the Lord, the power of His Word, the purpose of the work, the promise of the reward? And so he says in verse 14 at the very beginning, and I close with this phrase, "Remind them of these things." Remind the people. Remind the faithful and able men. Remind everybody. Remind the teachers. Remind them of these things. Remind them to be loyal, to be faithful, to be consistent, to endure, to sacrifice, to serve because these are the motives.

Let me ask you this in closing, what's the passion of your life? What is it? What are you really after? What do you really want to do with your life? I mean, are you looking for prosperity? Is that where you are? Is that it? Are you after comfort? Is that your main agenda? Do you want security, is that what you spend all your energies concerning yourself with? That's not what built the church, by the way, people who were concerned about themselves. In fact, the church for all of its growth and through all of its years has seem to walk over the bodies of the fanatics who died to preserve it.

A favorite little quote from Theodore Roosevelt occupies a prominent place in my home because it is a tremendously profound reminder to me. This is what Theodore Roosevelt said, "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there's no effort without error and short coming, who does actually try to do the deed, who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion and spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the worst if he fails at least fails while daring greatly. Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious

triumphs even though checked by failure than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in a gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

I don't want to live in a gray twilight. I want to use my life to count for God and if I die I die to live and if I endure, I endure to reign. And I am moved by the preeminence of the Lord and His cause and I am moved by the power of His Word no matter what men may do, and I am moved by the preeminence of the work we do to think that we could be a part of God completing redemptive history. What a thrill. Let's bow together in prayer.

I'm reminded, Father, of the words of George Whitfield who said, "Lord, when You see me in danger of nestling down, put a thorn in my nest." Lord, help us not to nestle down, help us not to get comfortable in this world, but help us always to be on the cutting edge, to be all that You want us to be. We thank You that we can learn from our dear brother, Timothy, who today lives with You in Your glorious heaven and with whom some day we'll no doubt commune and sing the songs of redemption. And we thank You for all the other great men and women of the ages who gave themselves sacrificially for the cause that has given us our very life this day. We pray that we might be faithful and sacrificial in whatever ministry You've given to us, give us boldness and courage in the cause of the Savior in whose name we pray. Amen.

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