

Remember The Word

Living a life committed to God, first and foremost, will always bring persecution. It may be small or great, but it will come. Jeremiah was the godliest man of his time. As he grew in his dedication to God so too did the persecution. His persecution lasted many years and finally Jeremiah cried out to God “**Righteous are you, O LORD, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?**” (Jeremiah 12:1 ESV) God’s reply was not what Jeremiah expected or what we would hope for if we were in his position of suffering. In verse 5 God says, “**If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?**” My translation of what God is saying is, Jeremiah your suffering for My glory and is not over, in fact, it will continue. God does not give the prophet sympathy, but calls him to have more courage, run harder, run longer and grow stronger. For God had much work for the prophet yet to do.

In his letter Paul calls Timothy to this same level of courage and strength. Timothy is being persecuted and facing opposition from within and from outside the church. Paul does not offer sympathy, but calls Timothy to stand firm and serve Christ. Paul instructs Timothy, “**be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus ... ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**” (2 Timothy 2:1, 3) If you, like Timothy, have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior you have surrendered your life to Him. Christ owns you and you are a soldier in His army. That means you serve Him and battle evil no matter what the cost, even if that is your death. Let me ask each of you, as a soldier, are you preparing for battle? Are you spending time

honing your sword by studying God's Word and spending time in prayer? I don't know if I will ever spend enough time in prayer – life gets in the way. I pray more than in the past, but I need more.

I take my surrender to Christ seriously and stand here this morning and tell you I have faced persecution and am here only because it pleases God. A man was hired to beat me up. When he arrived at our house, I invited him in for coffee. I can tell you it was not me that thought to invite him for coffee, but God's instruction. After coffee and visiting, he decided he could not follow through with what he had been paid to do. God gives one the strength, courage and the wisdom, as one needs them, if we seek and trust Him. Because of God I am here today preaching the gospel. I can remember facing 2 men on a lonely and dark trail hired to kill me and without Christ I would have been scared to death, I would have mostly likely cried and begged for my life, but because of Christ I was given strength. I was calm and had only one concern and that was for someone to find the body so Joyce would know what had happened. God acted and I am here today preaching the gospel for your benefit.

What should I think of Jesus' words, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21) I often pray what is God's will for my life? What is the road Christ wants me to travel? My desire is to be obedient to Christ. What were Jesus' disciples to understand when Jesus said to them, "Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:38–39) Jim Elliot was a missionary to the Auca Indians of Ecuador. The Auca were known for warring with everyone, even other groups of Auca. Elliot told other missionaries that he would not protect himself if attacked because he was ready for heaven, but the unsaved Auca were not. Jim rephrased Jesus' words of Matthew 10:39 saying, "He

is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Jim and several other missionaries were martyred in 1956. Shortly afterwards his wife Elizabeth and the other widows reentered the Auca village and these people of violence began to come to Christ until the whole village had become believers.

Are you ready for heaven? Are you where God wants you – carpenter, teacher, homemaker, engineer, accountant, construction, sheet-metal fabricator, retired or pastor? Do you see the opportunities God is giving you where you are? Do people see you on your breaks or during lunch studying the Bible? Can you start a Bible study or prayer group before work with your coworkers? Does the God inspired words of the Bible sink into your mind and heart and change you? The Apostle John heard Jesus’ words, they sunk into his heart, they changed him and he later recorded them, “Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (John 15:20) If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior it is a sacred vow and there is no turning back. Persecution or no persecution you are called to share the gospel of Christ.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome saying, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18) Paul knew no matter how long he lived – time was short, there was kingdom work to be done and suffering, including death, was nothing compared to eternity in heaven in the presence of God. Matthew ben Levi, the tax collector, called to be a disciple of Christ wrote his gospel account and then, like Joseph the stepfather of Jesus, disappears. What happened? What price did he pay for being an apostle of the Christ? Matthew certainly was not as loud and outspoken as Peter, yet he wrote Christ’s gospel to the Jewish people. Matthew was a Jew and called Jews to Christ. You may have a variety of racial DNA in you, but you are living in

America and you are called to share Christ's gospel with those in your life. Those you meet and interact with everyday.

Timothy became a student of Paul during his second missionary journey and traveled with and was taught by Paul. Because of Timothy's mixed parentage, his father a Greek and his mother a Jew, he was perfect for Ephesus with its Greek influences and Jewish conclaves. So, Paul placed Timothy in leadership over the churches in Ephesus. After Paul is martyred no more is known of Timothy. But, we are blessed because of Timothy's struggles and the conflicts he had to deal with. Paul's letters to Timothy and in truth all of Paul's letters in the New Testament give us the framework in which to function properly as Christ's church today. Paul continues encouraging and challenging Timothy and he is encouraging and challenging you and me.

Remember He Is Risen (v.8-9)

Reading at verse 8 where Paul tells Timothy, [“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!”](#)

This is the foundation of true faith. One must not just know who Jesus is but believe He is the Christ. We are given the Bible that demonstrates Jesus filled all of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which would have been humanly impossible. However, we must take that step of faith to believe. As Paul preached the gospel, he calls Timothy to preach without regard of persecution and suffering. Paul calls not just Timothy to preach the gospel but the believers who read this letter. My beloved we are reading this letter, Paul is writing to you and me. History is replete of stories of the gospel of Christ going out despite the evil one's efforts to stop it. History is full of men and women who boldly proclaimed Christ and saw lives changed from

sinner without hope to saved sinner with the greatest hope, the hope of being reconciled to God through Christ.

My beloved, you remember Christ best not only when you are taking time to study, meditate and pray over the word but also when you are sharing it. Most people come to know who Christ is – the Son of the Living God through relationship with other Christians. I can tell each of you that God wants to use you to bring others to Christ. He calls you to be His ambassadors. Paul was used to bring many to Christ, Timothy was one and we know from the Book of Acts that Mark or John Mark worked with Timothy in Asia Minor. Mark walked with Christ as His disciple for three years and wrote the second gospel account of Christ. Even though he preceded Paul he accepted Paul as an apostle of Christ and one who taught him how to be a missionary. Mark died just a couple of years after Paul but the gospel continued.

Just as Paul refers to Christ’s lineage as an “[offspring of David](#)” in verse 8 fulfilling Old Testament prophesy. There is a lineage of brave Christians - Paul to Timothy and John Mark continuing to this day, to you. Look in verse 2, “[and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.](#)” (2 Timothy 2:2) You are part of this lineage or chain of people entrusted with the holy gospel of Christ going all the way back to the first century and carried forward to this day. Have you thought about what an honor and privilege you have been given? Have you thought about the responsibility and the duty? The question is, are you obedient to Christ and His calling in your life or disobedient?

You may suffer, be imprisoned, be persecuted and even be martyred but this will not stop the Word of God from going forth. Paul wrote in verse 9 that it is the gospel, “[for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is](#)

not bound!” Paul is suffering and in prison but the “word of God is not bound!” The Word of God will still go forth, it cannot be imprisoned and it will not be stopped, even if we are stopped.

By 400 AD there were almost 600 miles of catacombs under the city of Rome. Most were dug by 10 generations of Christians over a period of 300 years. In the early history of the church these catacombs served not only as a place for burying the dead but also as a meeting places for as many as 4 million Christians over those 300 years. A common inscription found on the walls of the catacombs is “The Word of God is not bound!” These are the very words we read this morning! It may have been this determined faith or this inscription or the scripture we study this morning that inspired Martin Luther to write his famous hymn “*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*” which includes the line, “The body they may kill; God’s truth abideth still; His kingdom is forever.” The Word of God is not bound!

In 1678 John Bunyan wrote his most famous work, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, after spending 12 years in prison for preaching the gospel. Over the last 400 years only the Bible has outsold it. Just as prison did not stop the Apostle Paul from preaching and certainly did not stop the gospel from going out neither did it stop Bunyan! His cell had a small window that only allowed a view of the high prison wall. Despite the lack of view Bunyan often would preach from his cell in his loud clear voice going forth from the window. People, both believers and unbelievers would gather outside the prison wall to wait for his preaching and if he began to preach they would send word out and hundreds would come to the prison wall to listen to the gospel of Christ. Bunyan did not let prison get in the way of his calling to share the gospel. My beloved, are there things that you are allowing to get in your way? As Paul told Timothy, I tell you, be faithful and share the gospel!

I remember when a man had been hired to shoot me and as he prepared he instead accidentally shot himself and slowly died. Joyce and I spent time comforting and praying with his family. God acted and I am here today to preach the gospel. I take Paul's words into my heart, "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." You see it is my calling and duty and honor and pleasure to preach the gospel.

Remember Salvation Is Through Him (v.10)

Jesus Christ endured for the salvation of those God had chosen. Paul endured and 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 called Timothy to endure and he did. Million of Christians have endured and been martyred so that we might be here this morning. In 2016 more than 60,000 Christians we martyred. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "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." (1 Corinthians 10:13) God does not say your escape will be in this life! He will give you what you need when you need it, just as he did for the 60,000 Christians who were put to death last year. They are in heaven. However we remain and are called to kingdom work.

I remember when men with torches, bows and arrows surrounded my family and me. They had come to burn us out, but God acted and we are here today. By God's grace and power I am here today preaching the gospel. How could I deny anything Christ asks of me? 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." We know from history these were sincere words and Paul lived out these words until his death. Is not Paul one who truly lived Jesus' words, "Go

therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:19–20) If you believe in Jesus as the Christ you also are called to “make disciples.” The Bible is clear that God sovereignly calls people to Himself. It is also clear that the God calls those who belong to Him to take His gospel out to people for them to hear and be forever changed. Paul clarified the process God uses that involves us, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:14–17) Faith comes by the power of Christ’s words, from the hearing of the Bible. Faith comes by the study of the Bible, but the emphasis is on hearing. It is not by hearing preaching about Christ or a sermon that may use a verse here or there from the Bible, but faith comes by the power of God’s Word when it is preached as God has given it. My beloved do we have beautiful feet? Are we sharing or preaching the “good news” of Jesus Christ? If not, why not? Do we believe the Bible is trustworthy? Do we believe it is the Word of God?

Remember His Faithfulness (v. 11-13)

Paul ends this paragraph with verses 11 to 13, look at these verses, “The saying is - what? “The saying is trustworthy...” Trustworthy means it is absolutely true! Paul shares this absolute truth, “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.” So here is

“where the rubber meets the road.” Those of you who are younger might be asking, “Pastor what does that mean?” I am glad you asked - let me tell you.

Where the rubber meets the road is the most important point, the moment of truth. An athlete can train all day, but the race is ***where the rubber meets the road*** and they'll know how good they really are. It is the rubber of the tire that holds the racecar to the track at extreme high speeds. This idiom I hope helps us to understand what Paul wants us to see and understand. We will not deny Christ only if we believe with all our heart, mind, and soul. Then we will be obedient to share the gospel and be willing to risk persecution. This is ***where the rubber meets the road***. God does not need you or me to fulfill His eternal plan of salvation. What a blessing that He uses us – He gives us the privilege to be part of His plan. This is what Paul means when he wrote in verse 13, ***“if we are faithless, he remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself.”*** Peter preached at Pentecost and the number of believers grew by 3000 that day. However, sit back and think about how the church exploded in the first 100 years. It was not by inspired men like Peter preaching and bringing 1000s at one time to Christ. The church exploded because believers shared who Christ is and what He had done in their lives. They invited people to church. As has been true throughout church history, church growth and expansion results when believers share their testimony and bring people to church with them. It is your calling to share the gospel and grow Christ’s church. This is how Canyon Bible will grow to be God’s brighter light in the East Mountains.

People can argue theology. People will argue over the difficult concepts that as humans we struggle with concerning God’s eternal plan. But people cannot argue with your testimony - what God has done in your life. They can call you a liar or believe you, but they cannot argue. My beloved just as we are blessed by the writings of the New Testament that give us the story of who Jesus is and what He did for mankind until His return and letters written to clarify and deal with the

problems of the early church, which are the problems of the church today, you bless others by knowing the Word of God, believing in Jesus as the Christ and telling your story of who you were before Christ and who you are now in Christ. Paul has woven his testimony through his writings. He reveals to us who he is in Christ and why he is so driven for people to know Christ. Paul is a man who truly believes!

Would a brave soul like to share their testimony with their brothers and sisters here today? We would like to know you in an even deeper way than we have up to this point. We desire to know how Christ has changed your life.