

Something to Remember **2 Timothy 2:8-10**

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 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.

Introduction — There are many things in life you and I need to remember. These include appointments, important numbers, bits of information, peoples' names, and directions to certain locations. Important past events should also be remembered. For instance, Texans cried, "Remember the Alamo," during their war with Mexico. "Remember the Maine" was shouted by U.S. citizens during the Spanish American War. In World War II the saying was, "Remember Pearl Harbor." If Americans today had a similar cry, it would probably be: "Remember 9-11!" Each of these calls to remember refers to a defeat and is meant to spur people to a future victory. But the call to remembrance we are considering this morning refers to a tremendous victory that is still at work today.

That challenge comes from Paul's final letter, which was written from prison to Timothy, his close friend and associate. The apostle is at the end of his life and awaiting execution in Rome. In that letter, he offers counsel and encouragement to the man who will continue his work. Paul says in effect, "Timothy, if you want your ministry to be strong and effective, there are certain things you must always remember. In particular, do not forget Christ's resurrection."

"Remember Jesus Christ, *risen from the dead*, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel."

That statement cites a factor that was all-important to the success of Paul's life and ministry, as it is to ours. While on the cross, Jesus endured the punishment each of us has coming because our sin. He then broke the bond of sin and death by his resurrection. This is the resurrection-based "gospel" or good news we must always believe, remember, then share with the surrounding world.

Why is the message of the Cross and Easter worth remembering? There are at least four reasons:

Simple — First, we remember because it's a *simple* message which all people need to hear and anyone can understand. What is that simple message? Here's one version: *Jesus died for your sins so that you can be forgiven of them and reconciled to God. After dying on the cross, he broke the chains of death never to die again. We are offered new and eternal life in Christ, if we put our faith in the risen Lord and follow him.*

But we must be careful here. While the message of Jesus risen from the dead is simple, it is definitely *not* simplistic! A simplistic message is a superficial message; one that fails to take seriously the real issues and problems of human existence. Such issues include pain, mortality, estrangement, moral corruption, and guilt. These are the issues which eat away at us; and neither denial nor a band-aid approach will cut it. Neither will a human-based "solution" which requires us to jump through a series of hoops in our own strength, and without any assurance of ever reaching the finish line.

But the message of Christ's resurrection, while easy to understand and share, is anything but simplistic. It faces our core problems head-on: Jesus was crucified for our salvation and sealed the deal by rising from the dead. The Resurrection also serves as the capstone for the Christian faith and its strongest evidence. Accept it as true and all the rest falls into place. That is, if the Resurrection really happened, we should have no difficulty accepting other biblical miracles, the deity of Christ, forgiveness of even our worst sins, and a host of other important truths. In short, if Jesus—God in human flesh—can break the hold of death to never die again, he can do anything!

II. Supernatural — Second, we remember the Resurrection and its message because it provides a *supernatural* answer to our fallen condition and situation. This is important in light of the total failure of human-centered solutions to our great existential problems.

This failure was noted by *Time* magazine in back in 1973 in a series of essays entitled "Second Thoughts About Man." The articles examined a host of modern problems such as crime, poverty, and prejudice—which persist despite our repeated attempts to conquer them. The series' conclusion—which contained the views of leaders in behavioral psychology, religion, education, and science—was not only that those disciplines have largely failed to improve things, but that *all* purely

human efforts will continue to be fruitless. And here we are in 2017, and, if anything, things have gotten worse!

If that's the case, then, our only hope has to come from outside the human realm; and from something or someone who far exceeds our intelligence, power, and love. That's what the word *supernatural* means: "beyond and above nature."

This is precisely what Christianity is about and provides. It is centered on a divine Person who is over us and superior us—but who has entered our world as one of us for the purpose of saving us. The Resurrection is absolute proof of this, and its power is offered to each of us who, by faith and commitment, embrace Jesus. In short, Christ changes lives. This is what Paul repeatedly stresses throughout his epistles:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (**2 Cor. 5:17**).

"...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (**Phil. 3:10**).

This is the gospel we believe and proclaim: that God does something supernatural in the lives of those who come to him in humility and with outstretched hands—and he does it from within us. It's not a matter of achieving our salvation through our own works, but God working in each of us and with our cooperation as we grow closer to him and our characters mature. Paul calls much of this the "fruit of the Spirit"—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (**Gal. 5:22-23**).

III. Scriptural — Third, we remember Jesus and his resurrection because it is *grounded in Scripture*. In our passage from 2 Timothy, this is what Paul, in part, means when he refers to Jesus being "the offspring of David." That phrase points all the way back to God's covenant with Abraham and the history of Israel, from which eventually came God's great Deliverer, Jesus himself. In other words, the Christian faith is not a novelty, but the culmination of God's great purpose and plan for the human race.

For example, this is why Paul calls the Christian church the "Israel of God" in **Galatians 6:16**. It is also why the New Testament is full of

titles and descriptions of the church that originally applied to Israel in the Old Testament (**Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:6**). Christ's body, the church, is not an add-on or after thought, but the fulfillment of what God has been doing before and since Abraham.

This linkage of Christ and his gospel to the Old Testament was stressed by Jesus himself. For example, referring to the Old Testament, he tells his listeners in **Luke 24:45-46**: "*This is what is written*: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day..."

Likewise, Paul later wrote the he had delivered to the Corinthians "that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*" (**1 Cor. 15:3-4**). Peter declared that even David had written of Jesus' resurrection. In his Pentecostal sermon of **Acts 2**, that apostle quotes **Psalms 16:10**, where David writes prophetically: "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (**Acts 2:27**). All those early Christian leaders were convinced that the message they proclaimed was from eternity, stemming from God's redemptive plan which existed from before the foundation of the world (**Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet.1:20**).

And so, as we remember Christ's resurrection, we realize that the substance of our faith is not some fad or novelty, but eternal; expressed in both Testaments, going back way before that and forward into eternity.

IV. Satisfying — Finally, we remember and proclaim Jesus and his Resurrection because it *satisfies* our deepest longings.

Of course, there is much in life that is quite *dissatisfying*. Even our pleasures eventually fade. In fact, things can get so bad that we can begin to wonder if life itself is worth living.

But what if, in spite of all the pain, sorrow, and disappointments, we learn that our ultimate future is going to be fabulous? What if that future is more than a great hope, but a guarantee that can never be taken from us? What if that future does not depend upon a lucky break, but is in the hands of our living Lord, who has gone ahead to prepare an existence which exceeds anything we can possibly

imagine? If that's what we, by faith in Christ, can claim, it changes everything—including the pains we now endure.

We have an example of this here in the second chapter of 2 Timothy. Paul is writing to his best friend, but the setting is not a good one. The apostle is in a Roman prison and his execution is just around the corner. His freedom is gone for good, his health is lousy, and many of his associates have abandoned him. But instead of wallowing in bitterness and self-pity, Paul is rejoicing. Why? Simply because of what the risen Christ has secured for him and everyone else who is “in Christ.” Therefore, he declares in **2:11-13**:

“The saying is trustworthy, for: 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.”

Paul found that the gospel of the crucified and resurrected Lord was satisfying beyond and in all circumstances. That’s why, in an earlier prison epistle, he writes:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (**Phil. 4:4-7**).

This is not wishful thinking, but resurrection-based trust in Christ, who will sustain us and provide joy and satisfaction no matter what.

And so, remember Christ and his resurrection. Not just every Easter but through all of life and in all circumstances. It provides both the evidence which sets Christianity apart from all other religions and philosophies, as well as a sure and abiding assurance that is *simple, supernatural, scriptural, and eminently satisfying*.