

Main Idea: In 2 Timothy 2:8-13 Paul gives fatherly counsel to his spiritual son, Timothy. This spiritual dad is facing death and wants to motivate his spiritual son to remember two critical subjects. There’s much we can learn here about influencing others for Christ.

- I. Remember a person (8-10).
 - A. Put your focus on the person of Christ (8a).
 1. Think about his humanity.
 2. Think about his deity.
 - B. Put your focus on the work of Christ (8b).
 - C. Put your focus on the gospel ministry of Christ (9-10).
 1. It results in suffering for us (9).
 2. It will result in salvation for others (10).
- II. Remember the promises (11-13).
 - A. They motivate loyalty (11-12a).
 - B. They warn against disloyalty (12b-13).

Make It Personal: Some questions to ponder...

1. If Paul wrote this letter to me, what would he say I needed to hear most?
2. If I were writing this letter to my spiritual son, what would I say?
3. Who are the spiritual sons and daughters in my life?

Missionary Testimony: Blair

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

On this Fathers’ Day, we naturally think of fathers, and with gratefulness! Thank you, dads, for the investment you’re making to influence the next generation for Christ.

But today I also want us to think of men who are like fathers, and women too.

Spiritual fathers and mothers. God uses these individuals too to exert great influence on our lives.

What are the most important subjects a spiritual father can address with his spiritual son? Say, for instance, you’re facing death, and you have a piece of paper and pen in hand, and you want to write a letter to your spiritual son, to say something that’s going to make a difference once you’re gone.

What are you going to say? What realities will you discuss with him? The stock market? How the Reds did last night?

No. Nothing inherently wrong with such discussions, but there’s something at stake here, and you don’t want to waste the opportunity.

This was precisely what faced Paul as he wrote the letter we call 2 Timothy. He identifies his recipient at the outset: “To Timothy, my dear son (1:2).”

Paul loved Timothy. Timothy didn’t have a God-fearing father. But God gave him a spiritual father. He used Paul to build on what this young man’s mother and grandmother had taught him from the Scriptures, and he led him to the knowledge of Christ as his Savior and Lord.

And that was just the beginning. Paul disciplined Timothy, then mentored him, and then recruited him for the ministry of the gospel. For nearly two decades they served together in making Jesus known throughout the Roman Empire.

But now Paul has reached the end of his ministry road. He’s been arrested by the Romans, and will soon be executed for his commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

He’s in Rome. Timothy is 800 miles away in Ephesus, and struggling. He’s battling fears, and a spirit of timidity that’s plagued him throughout his life.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

He needs a word from his mentor. And Paul sends it. But this isn't simply a personal word. What's at stake is the future of the young church, and the mission of the gospel. What will happen after Paul's gone?

Paul basically says four things to Timothy, and they all to do with the gospel.

Chapter One—Proclaim the gospel, Timothy, the good news of Jesus.

Chapter Two—Reproduce into other men who can proclaim the gospel, Timothy.

Chapter Three—Protect the gospel from those who would alter it, Timothy.

Chapter Four—Be willing to die for the gospel, Timothy, for it's worth it.

I'm going to pose some questions now that I'll raise again when we finish. *Who are the Timothys in your life? Who are your spiritual sons and daughters? What would you say to them if you were writing this letter? What kinds of subjects would you address as of utmost importance?*

And then, the question is, of course, *why wait?* You don't have to wait to discuss these matters of ultimate importance with your spiritual sons and daughters. Let's make the most of the opportunities we have *now*.

So we're in chapter two. Paul has challenged Timothy to embrace his calling as a leader, and no matter what the cost, to target and pour his life and gospel truth into the hearts of other men, who could then teach others (2:2).

What will this take? It will take the discipline of a soldier (2:3-4), the determination of an athlete (2:5), and the diligence of a farmer (2:6). All made possible by God's grace, of course. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," Paul told Timothy at the outset of this section (2:1).

2 Timothy 2 is a great chapter for leaders. If you're a leader, or believe God wants you to be, you need this chapter.

What's involved in being a leader in the ministry? Paul uses seven metaphors to illustrate the task of the leader. A leader must see himself as a:

1. Teacher (1-2)
2. Soldier (3-4)
3. Athlete (5)
4. Farmer (6)
5. Workman (15)
6. Vessel/instrument (21)
7. Servant (24)

Last time we zeroed in on images two, three, and four. But before Paul hits the final three images, he puts the spotlight on the ultimate example of discipline, determination, and diligence.

In his fatherly counsel to his spiritual son, he addresses two critical subjects in verses 8-13. There's much we can learn here about influencing others for Christ.

I. Remember a person (8-10).

I love the simplicity of the first three words in verse 8. "Remember Jesus Christ." The AV says, "Remember that Jesus Christ," but there's no "that" in the original Greek text that Paul wrote. The "that" was inserted by the 16th century English translators to make it read smoother, due to the participle that follows.

But it's unnecessary. In fact, it distracts from Paul's emphasis.

Remember Jesus Christ!

Listen, Timothy. If you are going to be used of God, here's the bottom line key. *Remember Jesus Christ!* This exhortation identifies the heart of Christianity. *Remember Jesus Christ!*

It's the key to our joy. *Remember Jesus Christ.*

And it explains our sins. We failed to *remember Jesus Christ*.

This is precisely what Jesus Himself told us to do. "This do in remembrance of Me."

But what specifically must I remember about Jesus Christ if I am to be God's kind of leader? Paul tells Timothy, and us, to put our focus on three things pertaining to Christ in verses 8-10.

A. Put your focus on the person of Christ (8a). How do I become a Christian? By coming to know and trust Jesus Christ personally. A person knowing a Person. And how do I grow and live the kind of Christian life that pleases Him? By remembering Jesus Christ! A person remembering a Person.

We don't remember a list of propositions. We don't remember a church creed. We don't remember an experience we had. We're called to remember a *person*.

This is the rallying call of the church. REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST!

But what specifically about this person must we remember? Who is He? Verse 8 "Remember *Jesus Christ*." He is *Jesus*. And He is the *Christ*. Those two words sum up two vital realities concerning this person, and we must call attention to both of them.

1. *Think about his humanity.* Paul actually highlights Jesus' humanity in two ways here.

First, notice the order of His name. JESUS Christ. Usually Paul uses the reverse order (1:1, 2, 9, 13; 2:1). Yet here he puts "Jesus" first. Why?

Jesus is His name. Christ is His title. Jesus points to His humanity. Joseph and Mary were instructed to call their son "Jesus" (Matt 1:21). "Christ" is not His last name, but His title (a Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah").

Secondly, Paul highlights Jesus' humanity by the phrase in verse 8, "raised from the dead, *descended from David*." The AV says, "of the seed of David." Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

One thousand years before Paul penned these words, God gave a promise to King David through the prophet Nathan, in 2 Samuel 7:11-14, "The LORD Himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom...I will be his father, and he will be my son."

Jesus is the son of David, the king and heir to David's throne. Remember His humanity. He knows what we feel. He's taken on flesh and blood, and suffering too. Think about His humanity.

But not just His humanity, for He's more than a mere man.

2. *Think about his deity.* "Remember Jesus CHRIST." Jesus is the *Christ*, the God-anointed, God-chosen, God in the flesh, God sent Savior of the world.

Never forget that. This is at the heart of Christianity, and every leader must think of it continually. This person that I'm remembering, who has rescued me, to whom I belong, and whom I am now seeking to make known to others, is the God-man.

Timothy, spiritual dads and moms in this room, put your focus on the person of Christ.

You say, "How do we know for sure that Jesus is God?" We know it for several reasons. The claims of Scripture, the claims of His Father, His own claims, His miracles. But there's something else that makes it absolutely clear, which becomes our second focus.

B. Put your focus on the work of Christ (8b). What event testifies to the deity of Jesus Christ? None like this one, says Paul. "Remember Jesus Christ, *raised from the dead*."

Pastor E.V. Hill said it well, "Lots of great men left tracks going up to their graves. But only one left tracks on the other side of the grave!"

What did Jesus Christ do? He was *raised from the dead*.

My friend, the resurrection is THE central tenet of Christianity. The validity of the Christian faith either rises or falls on this doctrine.

Years ago there was a tape by Josh McDowell talking on university campus, and he said, "Disprove the resurrection and you can disprove Christianity. Give evidence that the tomb is not empty."

There's the heart of Christianity. Jesus Christ defeated death and walked out of His tomb alive. Remember that Timothy! Remember the work of Christ.

You say, "Is Paul insinuating that could Timothy forget the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection?" No. Paul's not talking about remembering idle facts stored away in Timothy's brain cells. The verb "remember" = present tense, hence a continual responsibility; "to call to mind."

I'm using the term *focus*. Focus, Timothy. Put your focus on the person of Christ, and the work of Christ. And thirdly...

C. Put your focus on the gospel ministry of Christ (9-10). Paul concludes verse 8, "This is my gospel." The AV says, "according to my gospel."

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. They are one and the same.

But Paul is more specific. "This is *my* gospel," he says. He takes ownership for this good news. First, you believe it and are saved by it. Then you say, "it's mine," and make it known to others.

Our task, brothers and sisters, is to announce to the world who Jesus is, and what Jesus did. And then invite them to do as we have done, place their faith in Him, and receive God's forgiveness and gift of eternal life.

This is the gospel of Christ, *our* gospel, and our gospel ministry.

And what will happen if we embrace this ministry? Paul identifies two outcomes.

1. It results in suffering for us (9). "For which [referring back to the gospel] I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal."

Paul had paid a great price because of the gospel. Because of the gospel, he suffered, indeed, in two ways. One, as an "evildoer" says the AV, a "criminal"; one who commits gross misdeeds or serious crimes (the term is used in Luke 23:32 in reference to the two "malefactors" crucified with Christ).

It's used to be popular to call yourself a Christian in our country. That's changing. This past Wednesday evening, a man walks into a church prayer meeting in Charleston, SC, pulls out a gun, and kills the pastor and eight others.

In Paul's day. Christians were viewed as criminals when Paul wrote this letter in AD 67. Christians were viewed as an illegal association, a threat to the Roman Empire.

A great wave of persecution was connected to an event that occurred in 64 AD. On July 19, a great fire broke out in Rome. It burned for six days and seven nights and devastated the city. Famous buildings perished in the flames. So did the homes of common people. It's likely that Emperor Nero started the fire himself. He had a passion for building, and it was said that he deliberately fired the city so he could build a new and nobler Rome.¹

So guess what the Roman government did? They needed a scapegoat, and they found one. They blamed the fire on the Christians. And massive persecution erupted.

¹ According to Barclay.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, said this about the Christians. He called them a "class of people loathed for their vices." They were the enemies of humanity.²

So Paul was apprehended and accused of being an evildoer. He was suffering, he says, "even to the point of being chained like a criminal." The AV, "even unto bonds."

Paul was locked in some Roman dungeon, chained like a vicious animal in some hole in the ground. And every time he moved his arm, his chain rattled. And every time his chain rattled, he remembered why he was there. He was a prisoner because he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You say, "What a tragic shame! The gospel messenger locked up in chains!" Yes, a tragedy. But no, the gospel was not locked up.

"But God's word is not chained," insists Paul. The world can imprison the messenger of God, but not the message of God! God's Word "is not bound," says the AV.

The same word "bound" is used of tying weeds in a bundle (Matt 13:30), of binding a corpse with linen cloths and spices (Jn 19:40), and even binding an animal. You can do that with weeds, and a corpse, and an animal. And even the gospel messenger.

But remember this, Timothy. They can lock me up, but they can't lock up the gospel, for God's Word is not bound.

Which brings us to the second outcome Paul mentions. One, gospel ministry results in suffering for us. But two...

2. *It will result in salvation for others (10).* In verse 10 Paul says, "Therefore." In light of this reality that God's word is not chained. "I endure." I choose "to remain under; to be steadfast under." That's what endure means.

I choose to endure "everything." In the AV, "all things." Don't miss the ramifications of those words. Paul's not tossing around a meaningless word here. Just think of the "all" he could recount if he so desired!

As he did in 2 Corinthians 11:24-29. "Five times I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles...I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked."

Yes, he could say, "I endure everything." That's little he hadn't endured.

But why? Why did he endure all this? He tells us right here. He says, "for the sake of the elect." That's who Paul had in mind as he took the blows, a people chosen by God.

Did he know who they were? No. But he knew that God did. He knew that, in His mercy, God had chosen to save a host of undeserving, hell-bound sinners. They are out there, and I'm going out to give them something.

"I endure everything for the sake of the elect, *that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*"

Many people shy away from the doctrine of election. They can't understand it, so they choose to avoid it, or redefine it, or even attack it.

Not Paul. He loved this doctrine. Every time someone mocked him, or hit him, or chased him out of town, or threw a shackle on his wrist, this is what motivated him.

Though it doesn't seem like much is happening right now, I know this, the abc's of gospel ministry.

² F.F. Bruce, "The Defense...", p. 63

- a. God has chosen a people.
 - b. God will save those people.
 - c. God will use His Word to reach these people.
- I hope you know the abc's! Here they are again.

a. God has chosen a people.

Why would He do this? Because people are lost rebels and heading for eternal hell, and none on their own will ever choose Him. As Paul explains in Romans 3:10-11, "There is no one righteous, not even one...no one who seeks God."

So the entire sea of humanity would perish in everlasting torment. But for God's mercy. In His merciful grace, He has chosen to rescue a people. He sent His Son into the world to rescue His undeserving chosen ones (John 17:2), and His Son did just that, as the Good Shepherd who "lay down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Romans 8:33 "Who shall lay a charge against God's elect?"³

Titus 1:1 "Paul...an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's elect."

1 Peter 1:1 "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. To God's elect."

God has chosen a people. Christians are called "God's elect." See Eph 1:3-6/

b. God will save those people.

"All that the Father gives me will come to Me," said Jesus in John 6:37. The Father always finishes what He starts. The Son always accomplishes what He's given to do. He will save these unworthy sinners He's purposed to bring back to Himself.

How will He do it?

c. God will use His Word to reach these people.

"But God's Word is not chained," says Paul in verse 9. That's why was in chains, because he took God's Word to a world that didn't want to hear it. Because he knew God was preparing a people to receive it.

Verse 10, "...that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus."

This is what your spiritual father wants you to know, Timothy. And you too, sons and daughters of the living God.

And this is what we need to pass on to our spiritual children. Make sure your focus is right here. On the person of Christ, on the work of Christ, and on the gospel ministry of Christ. *Remember a person.*

Here's Christianity 101, and 201, and 401. We never move beyond it. Being a Christian is all about a person. Not being religious, but knowing Christ. And this relationship effects every area of my life. I think of Him continually. I focus on His person and work. I devote myself to sharing His gospel. And though I fall short, I know that His perfect life and death as our substitute provides my complete salvation and standing with God. This is what it means to be a Christian.

Am I describing your experience? Do you have a relationship with Christ? And is this what you're investing your life to accomplish in others, even if it results in chains?

You say, "Well, is it worth it?" Oh, yes. That brings us to the second reality Paul passed on to his spiritual son. One, remember a person. Two...

II. Remember the promises (11-13).

Verse 11, "Here is a trustworthy saying." The AV says, "It is a faithful saying." Paul apparently is quoting from something with which Timothy was familiar. Perhaps a hymn used in the early church. Maybe a recitation they used at a baptismal service. Wherever it came from, Paul says it's a "trustworthy" or "faithful" saying. Something reliable, dependable.

³ Col 3:12 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved..."

Timothy (and you, my fellow soldiers of Christ), here are four promises we need to remember. And for two reasons. The first two motivate loyalty, and the second two warn against disloyalty to the person to whom we have declared our allegiance.

Verses 11-13 “If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

We could spend much time investigating each. But it boils down to this. The first two couplets are positive. They tell us what we should do, in essence, Be LOYAL to Jesus Christ. The final two couplets are negative. They sum up what we should not do, in essence, Be DISLOYAL to Jesus Christ.

That’s what these promises do, which is why we need to remember them. First...

A. They motivate loyalty (11-12a). Notice verse 11, “If we died with Him.” “For if we be dead with Him,” as the AV puts it. Of course, this is reality if we are a true Christian. We did die. We are dead.

Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily (Luke 9:23).” Anyone can come to Christ, but he or she must first die.

I am crucified with Christ, confesses Paul in Galatians 2:20. I have died.

This death is symbolized when we are baptized. “Or don’t you know,” says Paul in Romans 6:3-4, “that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into his death...”

When we trusted Christ, we died. We died to our old way of life. And were raised in Christ to “live a new life” (Romans 6:4).

We died to self. We died to security in this life. We died to safety. We now identify with Christ. He was rejected by the world. Should we expect the world to befriend us? No. We are dead. We have forfeited all worldly ambition. We *died*.

And since that happened, this will follow.

“We will also live with him.” This is our certain hope. We will live with our Savior forever and ever in a new heaven and earth. Even now we live with Him. “For lo, I am with you always,” says Jesus in Matthew 28:20. So, for me to live is Christ, says Paul in Philippians 1:21.

Notice the repetition of the word “with.” We have died *with* Christ. Now we live *with* Him and shall live with Him forever.. This is a promise, one that inspires loyalty.

And so does this promise.

Verse 12, “If we endure, we will also reign with him.” It’s the same word Paul used in verse 10, “Therefore I endure everything.”

Notice the tenses. If we “died” points to the past. If we “endure” points to the present. Day by day the Christian life involves saying no to self, and yes to Christ. Saying no to the world, and yes to Christ. Is it worth it? Yes.

“If we endure, *we will also reign with him.*” That too is a promise, a guarantee of what is coming. Those who die with Christ, and then endure by His grace, will reign with Him (see Romans 8:17 “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory”).

Remember these promises, Timothy, for they inspire loyalty. It is not easy to follow Christ in this world, but it will be worth it.

Then Paul gives two more promises.

B. They warn against disloyalty (12b-13). Here is another trustworthy saying, Timothy. “If we disown him, he will also disown us.” “If we deny him, he also will deny us,” says the AV.

This is a strong warning. The language is strong. The problem was real. Remember what Paul said in 1:15? "Everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me." "Has turned away from me," says the AV.

It's tragic, yet true. Some people identify with Christ only temporarily. Then when the excitement is gone, they deny Him. Some people profess Christ, but later the thrills of the world suck them back into their clutches.

What happened to these individuals? Some say they are "backslidden." Perhaps. Peter denied his Lord, in fact, the Lord predicted he would. But he later repented, and the Lord graciously restored him.

God alone knows the heart. It's possible for a person to deny Christ because he never truly knew Christ, not personally, not as Savior. Remember Judas?

These words are sobering. Don't water them down. "If we disown him, He will also disown us."

Then another warning promise. Verse 13, "If we are faithless [AV 'believe not'], he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself."

What is it that's impossible for Jesus to do? Deny Himself, says Paul. He will remain faithful. Faithful to His Father. Faithful to His people. Faithful to His promises to His people.

So if a person has truly repented and put their faith in Him for salvation, Jesus will never deny that person, for He's made a promise to that person. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish (John 10:27-28)."

That's His promise. When Jesus gives someone eternal life, they will never perish. So a true child of God can never become anything other than that.

But what if a person is "faithless", or "believes not"? What if "we" (Paul uses the personal pronoun) are faithless? *We*, people who presently say we believe in Jesus and are connected to His church?

Look carefully at verse 13. If we do that, if we give evidence that we lack true, saving faith (we are "faithless"), what does Christ do? He abides faithful. He cannot disown whom? Not the person who is faithless. He cannot disown *Himself*.

He never breaks a promise. So He never lets go of one who is truly His. But He doesn't keep one who has never truly become His.

Indeed, He is faithful to the warnings He gave to such. William Hendriksen puts it this way, "Faithfulness on his part means carrying out his threats...as well as his promises."⁴

What threats? Threats like the one He gave in Matthew 10:32-33, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."

John Stott explains, "Indeed, if he did not deny us (in faithfulness to his plain warnings), he would then deny himself. But one thing is certain about God beyond any doubt or uncertainty whatever, and that is 'he cannot deny himself.'"⁵

These are difficult words, but necessary. I see them as a promise that warns against disloyalty to Christ. We need this warning.

Paul gives a similar warning in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."

⁴ Taken from Stott, p. 64

⁵ Stott, p. 64.

Simply put, the Lord keeps those He saves, eternally secure. But not all who claim to be saved necessarily are. So if a person becomes faithless, it's evidence they never had saving faith to begin with.

And keep in mind who's reading this. Paul is talking to his spiritual son, Timothy.

Do you love those God has entrusted to you enough to talk to them about such fundamental matters? May we never give our children a false assurance. Paul didn't, not even with Timothy. He just gave him the promises of God, promises that motivate and warn, and knew the Spirit of God would use them to give Timothy what he needed.

If you want to know more, I urge you to do a study of the biblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, for the Bible makes two things clear. One, genuine Christians persevere. And two, Christ perseveres in behalf of genuine Christians.

We've seen Paul's counsel to his spiritual son today. Remember a person. Remember the promises.

Make It Personal: Some questions to ponder...

1. *If Paul wrote this letter to me, what would he say I needed to hear most?* Perhaps he would say, "My dear friend, I can't call you what I'd love to call you. My *son*, or my *daughter*. You need to be born again into the family of God."

But thankfully, most here today have been born again. What kind of counsel would Paul give you, if you were his spiritual son? It's a good question to ponder. Timothy was timid and fearful, so Paul wrote to help him. What does the Lord want to change in your life and mine?

2. *If I were writing this letter to my spiritual son, what would I say?* Think of the person, or persons, God has entrusted to you. What kind of counsel are you giving them? Does it sound like the counsel Paul gave Timothy? Are you having these kinds of conversations, about the Lord and His promises?

"Oh, I'm not very good at spiritual conversations. It's easier for me to talk about the Reds, and the stock market, and music, you know."

I do know. It's fine to talk about the Reds. But let's not lose sight of what matters most in life, and nothing matters more than knowing and remembering the person of Christ and the promises He made to us.

So let's talk about that. Which brings to a final question.

3. *Who are the spiritual sons and daughters in my life?* Have you led anyone to Christ recently? If not, ask God for the privilege and build some redemptive relationships with lost people. And then, once He privileges you to lead someone to His Son, take ownership of the honor of being a spiritual dad or mom.

Pray for that spiritual son. Model Christ before that spiritual son. Disciple that spiritual son, and get others from the church involved with you. Then unleash that spiritual son into ministry, so you become a spiritual grandparent.

Do as Paul did with Timothy. There is no greater joy.