

## The sermon

### Intro

Have you ever been troubled, disturbed by opposition to your Christian faith?

In my experience, I've had family members who didn't like the new me. I was a lot better when I got drunk and had zero moral convictions. Friendships eroded because I didn't get drunk and go to bars anymore. I wasn't invited to a friend's wedding because I evangelized too much. My stance towards the virgin Mary, she's just a sinner like the rest of us who need a Savior, ruffled some feathers. My challenging people who thought they were good wasn't met with cheer. I had an aspiring Universalist minister engage me in heated debate in the middle of a work classroom setting. I've had skeptics laugh at me and tell me I'm pretty much a delusional fool. I've had co-workers accuse me of being an inconsistent, that I pick and choose which parts of the Bible I wanted to follow.

Has your Christian faith ever made you feel uncomfortable?

Ever had a Christian friend troubled by the opposition they were encountering? How would you counsel a person in that situation?

Timothy's fearful of gospel opposition. Paul's counsel to Timothy is fascinating. Paul gives Timothy some gems you would have never expected.

### READ PASSAGE

### Body

#### Point 1: Remember Jesus (2:8-9)

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. – 2:8-9*

When life is hard, when the obstacles seem insurmountable, when circumstance scream out be discouraged, be fearful, what do we do? We **Remember Jesus**.

**First**, Jesus suffered. Jesus was rejected. Jesus was subjected to horrific torture. Timothy, follow in Jesus' steps.

*"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. –*

**John 15:18-19**

We experience hatred because Jesus is hated.

**Second**, Jesus rose. Rejection wasn't the final word. Suffering wasn't the final word. Death wasn't the final word. The Father vindicated the Son in the resurrection. The pattern is cross. Then crown. So it is with us. Suffer with Christ today. Reign with Christ when the kingdom comes.

#### **"offspring of David"**

**"offspring of David"** = means Jesus is the long-promised descendant of David who would defeat the enemies of God's people, usher in universal peace, and rule righteously in the kingdom forever and ever. Timothy had a Jewish mother (Acts 16:1). Jesus was the hope of Timothy's people. Jesus was the hope of God's faithful sufferers.

## Application

Christian, when life is hard. When following Jesus disrupts things and makes life a little uncomfortable, it's worth it. Remember Jesus. Remember Jesus suffered. Remember Jesus rose. Remember, we'll reign with him forever and ever! You're on the right side of history.

**Practical question:** Does remembering Jesus' experience give me confidence to endure suffering?

## Point 2: Endure suffering for the sake of the elect (2:9-10)

***But the word of God is not bound! <sup>10</sup> 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. – 2:9-10***

One might expect that if Christians are being imprisoned and executed for their faith, and if those who are free are fearful and too intimidated to speak the gospel that the church would shrivel up and die.

But that isn't what happens. Because ***“the word of God is not bound.”*** Paul's bound. The gospel isn't. Persecution restricts the church. But the gospel has free roam. The gospel isn't hemmed in by the adverse circumstances of the church. Christians suffer. The gospel thrives. The church expands.

*And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. – Acts 6:7*

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. – Romans 1:16*

*Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. – James 1:18*

*since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; – 1 Peter 1:23*

God's word is at work, bringing sinners to salvation. God's word does the work. Christian, how did God bring you to himself? Through his word.

Where should our confidence lie?

### ***“the elect***

Confidence in God's word stimulates Paul to endure whatever suffering comes his way (***“everything”***). Why? ***“for the sake of the elect.”*** What about the elect? Paul wants to see the elect ***“obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.”*** Meaning there's a group of people God has chosen to be saved, but they haven't been saved yet. They must be reached with the gospel.

To be elect is to be chosen, selected, picked from a larger group. Chosen for what? For salvation.

Before the foundation of the earth, before time began, God envisioned a fallen humanity and chose from among that mass of fallen humanity a group of individuals to be saved (Eph 1:3-6). These people were chosen, not because of any good God foresaw in them, rather, we were chosen ***“that we should be holy and blameless before him”*** (Eph 1:4). In other words, God chose unholy people so that they would become holy people, ***“according to the purpose of his will”*** (Eph 1:5). Those who were chosen for salvation will, in time, come to Jesus in faith without fail. Philippians 1:29 speaks of

faith as a gift granted to us who believe. The mechanism by which God ensures we come is called calling (Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 1:24) or drawing (John 6:44). If you came, you came because you were chosen to come.

Paul's saying there's a group of people out there whom God chose before the foundation of the world. They will, without fail, come to Christ before they die. It's my job to bring the gospel to these people. So I'm willing to suffer anything and everything so God's chosen ones can be saved.

In other words, belief in election inspires Paul to keep speaking despite opposition. Timothy, you know what we believe about election. Let this doctrine stimulate you to endure. Paul believes there's a connection between belief in election and ability to endure suffering!

Confidence in God's word, confidence in election. These stimulate endurance!

### Logic

I understand this may seem counter-intuitive, illogical to you. When someone first explained this concept to me, I said you're crazy. If election is true, I don't have to speak the gospel. Election means evangelism is unnecessary.

Sometimes our fallen logic needs to be corrected with biblical logic. The biblical logic, Paul's logic, is that people are sure to come. So we have all the more incentive to speak the gospel. The fact that election happened should stimulate evangelism, not discourage it! At least that's what Paul thinks. Does belief in election stimulate Paul to suffer? Yes! Does belief in election stimulate Paul to evangelize? Yes! Does Paul think election renders evangelism unnecessary? No!

### Questions about election

There's nothing mystical about election. How can I know if I was chosen? It's very simple. If you believe, if you've been born again, you were chosen before the foundation of the world.

How do I know if my loved one was chosen? I don't know. God hasn't chosen to reveal the list to us. So we freely proclaim the gospel with urgency to those God has placed in our lives.

**Practical question:** Am I proclaiming the gospel because the elect are out there?

### Point 3: Did I die with Christ? (2:11)

*"The saying is trustworthy"* = what I'm about to say is very important.

These four trustworthy statements are intended to stimulate Timothy to suffer well.

*for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;* – 2:11

This is a conditional statement.

*"If we have died with him"* (past experience), *"we will also live with him"* (future outcome).

To die with Jesus means to have experienced union with Christ and all that entails.

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. – Romans 6:3-8*

The person who has died with Jesus:

1. Has died to sin = no longer enslaved to sin/ruled by sin.
2. Has risen to “*newness of life*” = born again.
3. Has been united to Christ’s death = future resurrection to an immortal body is a done deal.

Both passages say, “*we will also live with him.*”

So the question we have to ask ourselves is, have I been born again? Have I risen to newness of life? Has God made a difference in my life? Has God made me a new person? Is God making me a new person today?

If so, you can have confidence you will rise with Christ. You’ll be given an immortal body fit for the kingdom of God.

**Practical question:** Have I been born again?

#### **Point 4: Am I enduring in the faith? – Endure! (2:12)**

*if we endure, we will also reign with him;* – 2:12

“*if we endure*” (present experience), “*we will also reign with him*” (future outcome).

“*endure*” = continue to endure, put up with resistance and opposition. To continue, persevere, stand one’s ground.

It’s gospel opposition that we endure. Meaning I don’t give up the gospel because the gospel makes my life hard.

It’s putting up with people’s anger and laughter. Putting up with disappointed family members. Being the young adult at work that can’t go to the dance club. Being shamed for “archaic, bigoted, ignorant, judgmental” beliefs.

So the question we have to ask ourselves is, am I continuing in the faith? Am I still trusting in the promises of eternal life and forgiveness of sins? Am I trusting in the merits of Christ’s death on the cross, or am I trusting in my own merit/goodness? Do I still believe the Bible is God’s inerrant word? Am I still repenting of sins when they pop up? Am I denying myself and following Jesus?

**Practical question:** Am I continuing in the faith?

#### **Point 5: Am I denying Jesus? – Confess Jesus publicly! (2:12)**

*if we deny him, he also will deny us;* – 2:12

“*if we deny him*” (present experience), “*he also will deny us*” (future outcome).

*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. – Matthew 10:32-33*

Charlie Kirk’s murder = opportunity for you to speak. Charlie was a man who publicly confessed Christ.

*"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. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' – Matthew 7:21-23*

What does it mean to deny Jesus today?

1. Jesus was a good moral teacher. He isn't God.
2. Jesus wasn't born of a virgin.
3. Jesus didn't rise from the dead.
4. The Old Testament isn't God's word.
5. The flood didn't happen.
6. Marriage isn't limited to a man and a woman.
7. All religions have equal value.
8. Jesus isn't the only way to God.
9. I don't need to be forgiven of my sins.
10. Being born again is a myth.
11. I can live however I feel like.
12. There will be no *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* for those who reject Jesus.

The issue is where am I today? Not did I made a "decision" five or 30 years ago? What is my stance towards Jesus today? Is it faith and repentance? Is it living to please him? Is it learning from him? Is it taking up my cross, denying myself, and following him? Or is it something else?

**Practical question:** Am I denying Jesus?

If so, your outcome is rejection, exclusion, relocation, *"weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

### **Point 6: Am I faithless? – Be faithful! (2:13)**

*if we are faithless, he remains faithful- for he cannot deny himself.* – 2:13

Paul isn't saying if we're faithless (if we don't endure, if we deny Christ), we'll be welcomed into the kingdom. We've already learned those who fail to endure, those who deny Christ, won't reign with Christ because they'll be denied by Jesus.

The idea is when a faithless person denies Jesus and Jesus denies them on the judgment day (*"depart from me"*), Jesus is remaining faithful to his word. To welcome one who denied him would be to deny himself.

The issue is am I faithful to Jesus today? Am I trusting his promises? Am I following his commands? Am I confessing him publicly? Am I loving his church?

Example: Someone says a prayer at age 6. They question the inerrancy of the Bible at age 15. They're okay with sexual immorality at age 17. They don't believe anymore at age 19. Jesus isn't God. Jesus isn't the only way to heaven. They live like God doesn't exist the rest of their life. Did they endure? [PAUSE] No. Did they deny Christ? [PAUSE] Yes. Will they reign with Christ? [PAUSE] No. This sort of person needs Paul's warnings, not false assurance. This sort of person needs a church willing to give robust, biblical answers to the hard questions when doubt emerges.

**Practical question:** Am I faithless?

### **Good News**

The good news is Jesus forgives those who are presently denying him and faithless. Jesus welcomes rebels to receive his mercy!

God the Father sent God the Son Jesus to the cross to die in the place of sinners. To rescue rebels. On the cross, Jesus was treated as if he lived your sinful life. If you trust in Jesus, you'll be treated like you lived Jesus' perfect life. Every sin forgiven. Jesus welcomes broken sinners. God rejoices when sinners repent = turn from their sin.

Are you faithless? Don't remain in this condition!

Turn from your sins by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection. Tell us if you believe.

Christian. Remember Jesus. The elect are out there. Bring them in with the gospel. Endure with confidence in God's keeping power!