

Remember Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] 2 Timothy 2, verses 1-13. This is God's holy word. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

! 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. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 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.

[1 : 15] 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. This morning we meet a man who is about to die.

He knows that he is about to die. Unless the Lord intervenes in an unexpected way, for this man, this is it. He is so very near to the end of his life.

Death is imminent for him. But this man is not lying on a deathbed. No, this man is in prison. It's the Apostle Paul, the man who wrote 2 Timothy, the letter that we just heard read from.

Paul had been sent by the Lord Jesus to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. And so he did. Over the course of many years, he took three different missionary journeys all around the Mediterranean region.

[2 : 26] And as he did that, through his ministry, the gospel spread by God's grace. Churches were planted. He saw many come to faith in Christ.

Many who became brothers and sisters of his in the Lord. And at the same time, many who became enemies of him and his Lord.

Paul was harassed. Paul was mocked. Paul was brutally beaten. He was nearly stoned to death.

And on a number of occasions, he was imprisoned.

Many of his letters, in fact, were written from prison. He was imprisoned in Jerusalem, in Caesarea, in Philippi, and in Rome.

Twice. We have good reason to believe, as we read the book of Acts, Paul there ends the book of Acts under house arrest in Rome. And we have good reason to believe that he was released for a couple of years after that house imprisonment, before once again being arrested, but this time actually thrown into prison.

[3 : 33] This is the situation that we find Paul in as he writes this letter. Imprisoned during the reign of Emperor Nero.

Now it is well recorded in history, Nero was crazy. This man was out of his mind. He was unstable. He was a cruel, compulsive man.

Roman historians around the time of Nero wrote that he actually started a devastating fire in Rome. A fire that he would use to clear land to build a grand temple for himself.

Now even crazy Nero knew, you won't get very good press, as the emperor for starting a fire that burns down two-thirds of the city. So Nero came up with a plan.

He blamed the Christians for that fire. He said that they had started it, out of hatred for the human race, end quote. That led to wide-scale persecution of Christians in Rome.

[4 : 37] Christians like Paul. And so he was imprisoned, likely living in some kind of dungeon or cell. The living conditions would have been very poor.

From the way that Paul spoke, even in this letter, he was exposed to the elements. He had little communication with the outside world. He had good reason to believe that.

Unlike other times that he had been imprisoned, this was probably the last. He wasn't going to be released, though. But he was awaiting his execution. As he says in chapter 4, verse 6, For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

And again in chapter 4, verse 18 this time, he speaks with confidence that the Lord will rescue him. Oh, but not in the way that we might expect. He's not anticipating a great earthquake and the prison doors swinging wide open again for him like they did in Philippi as he and Silas were praying and singing hymns together.

No, Paul's anticipating a very different sort of rescue. Really, a much better one. He says, The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.

[6 : 00] Again, we see Paul not expecting his release from prison, but his death in prison. And that through death, the Lord would bring him safely into his heavenly kingdom.

So this is a man staring death in the face, but with great confidence in God. And he writes to encourage and to motivate a brother in the Lord who perhaps himself needed some confidence. As we heard read at the opening of chapter 2, Paul says, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

So this man needed some courage. This man needed some boldness in the face of persecution and affliction himself. Paul writes this to a young man, a young pastor named Timothy.

Paul had disciplined Timothy through the years. He had obviously written a previous letter to Timothy that we have as well in our Bibles. Paul references Timothy in many other letters of his as well.

[7 : 07] Luke, who wrote Acts, he tells us about Timothy in that book, and we see his close relationship and partnership with Paul in Paul's gospel ministry.

This young man was dear to Paul. In 1 Corinthians, he calls Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. In 1 Timothy, he calls him my true child in the faith.

And here in 2 Timothy, he calls him my beloved child. Paul had this warm, fatherly affection for Timothy. And so as Paul approaches death, he writes one final letter to this beloved child of his.

Now he also expects and hopes that Timothy can come visit him. But these are the last written words, perhaps, that he will leave with Timothy. These are words that Timothy will be able to go back to and to remember what is it that his beloved mentor and father in the faith had told him.

Paul loved him, this young man that he had spent so many years traveling the Mediterranean region with and proclaiming the gospel. This young man that he had poured himself into and mentored and protected and loved like a son.

[8 : 25] Well, Timothy, who was now himself a pastor, shepherding a flock. Paul, his mentor, is writing to him now one final time. And these words are words that Timothy is intended to remember.

So in this letter, Paul exhorts Timothy. He comforts Timothy. He challenges Timothy. And he encourages Timothy.

In our verses this morning, we have three encouragements from a man about to die.

Encouragements written to Timothy, but they are for us as well.

All of God's word is for us as God continues to speak to us through it. So through these words written to Timothy, God is now speaking to us.

The Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy. And now, this morning, God in His word encourages us as well. So let's see these three encouragements together.

[9 : 25] Beginning with the first one. Remember Jesus Christ. And we see this beginning in verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.

So Paul points Timothy to Christ. He doesn't say, remember me. He doesn't say, remember all the great things that I said and did.

He doesn't say, remember what a great man I was. There are many times in Paul's writings that he does say something to the effect of, follow my example.

Imitate me. But it's always an example that points to Christ. So he says in Philippians 3, Paul says that his great desire is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, that He may share His sufferings, which is exactly what he's doing as he's writing 2 Timothy from that prison dungeon.

Sharing His sufferings. Becoming like Christ in His death. That by any means possible, He may attain the resurrection from the dead. So that is his goal.

[10:38] That is his aim. That is his ambition. And then he says this beginning in verse 12 of Philippians 3. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature think this way. And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

So we see even in that example, Paul calls us to imitate Him, to follow His example, but His example points us to Christ. The prize is Jesus.

The focus then is not on Paul, but on Paul's Savior, the one preached in his gospel. That has always been his aim, his goal, his great purpose.

[11:56] As Paul says in Colossians 1.28, Him, that's Christ, Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

And he doesn't waver from that aim in his last days. Prison won't stop Paul from doing that. Even as he says to Timothy, remember Jesus Christ.

Paul keeps the main thing the main thing. Paul's ministry was given to him by Jesus. And it was a ministry that centered on Jesus.

So Paul didn't preach a message to elevate himself, but just as he says in 1 Corinthians 2.2, For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

That was the heart of Paul's ministry. That was the heart of the matter for Paul, the good news of Jesus Christ. Now who is Jesus Christ?

[13:05] Well, Paul gives us these three qualifiers to tell us. First, he says, risen from the dead. Emphasizing, of course, the bodily resurrection of the Lord.

The proof that He is indeed the Son of God. This points here to His divine sonship. But then somewhat tied to this is that next phrase, the offspring of David.

Meaning that Jesus Christ in His humanity was descended from the line of King David. This is proof that He is indeed also the Son of David.

So this points to His human sonship. Jesus is the promised King from the Old Testament. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to send a righteous Savior King.

both the Son of David and the Son of God. These two phrases here in verse 8, taken together, they also point us to the historical reality that God became man.

[14:12] That God entered into human history as a person. The Lord Jesus Christ. Truly God and truly man. This is not some myth.

This is not some fanciful story. This is not some bedtime story to tell our kids at night. This is not, as Karl Marx called religion, the opium of the people.

Something to just kind of make us feel better and be able to cope with life. No, Paul says, the good news about Jesus Christ, it is grounded in reality.

It is grounded in history. Jesus Christ lived on the earth. He was born a baby, descended from David. You can trace his family's genealogy.

And he didn't just live, but he died, and he rose again. And he appeared, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, to more than 500 brothers at one time.

[15:14] Most of whom, Paul says, are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James. Then to all the apostles. Last of all, as one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Paul says, Jesus also appeared to me. I saw the Lord Jesus with my own eyes, risen from the grave, now ascended into heaven, the offspring of David.

And finally, that last phrase, as preached in my gospel. Now maybe that sounds a little strange to us. My gospel?

Is Paul saying the gospel is his? No, he's not being arrogant or haughty as though he has ownership of it. Like he's got a copyright pending on the gospel.

He's recognizing that others have come preaching another gospel. Many other different, distorted, false gospels. False ways of salvation.

[16:16] Their gospels are not the true gospel. His gospel. The good news that he, Paul, has been preaching. That is the true gospel.

As he says in Galatians 1.11, For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel was preached to me, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. So no, it's not Paul's gospel at the end of the day.

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the good news that Paul has delivered to so many. The good news of first importance, as he says in 1 Corinthians 15, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

That he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. That gospel. That one true gospel.

[17:22] And Paul is a faithful messenger. He's a faithful messenger who has been bringing it. He's a faithful servant of Christ as he has proclaimed it. And this gospel centers on his Savior.

So no, he doesn't say, remember me. He says, Timothy, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.

It seems so obvious, perhaps. Like, of course, Jesus is to be the center of our faith, the center of our lives.

And yet, how quickly can we lose focus? How quickly can we become distracted with lesser things? Here's that reminder that we constantly need.

Remember Jesus Christ. Keep the main thing, the main thing, in your life. And that is Jesus. To live is Christ and to die is gain.

[18:24] Our life is hidden in Christ. As we've received Christ, so walk in Him. Indeed, we ought to count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Jesus is our everything. He's our hope. He's our life. He's our righteousness. As we just sang this morning, He's our boast. He's our joy.

He's our strength. Whatever we do in word or deed, we're to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. As Paul wrote these words to Timothy, Timothy was facing himself persecution.

He could look at Paul's fate and he could think, this could be me too. So Paul gave Timothy what he needed. He needed encouragement. How could he stand firm in suffering and affliction, even in death?

By remembering Jesus Christ. Remembering the one who suffered and died for Him. Keeping His eyes fixed on Him.

[19:36] So we need this encouragement to press on. To continue to share Christ. To live for Christ. To love Christ. And to love others as Christ has loved us.

So, remember Jesus Christ. Risen from the dead. The offspring of David. God who took on flesh. Who truly lived and died and rose again for our salvation.

We press on as we remember Him. That's the first encouragement that we receive from this man about to die. Here's the second. Rest in the sovereignty of God.

Remember Jesus Christ. Rest in the sovereignty of God. I'll begin reading again starting in verse 8. 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.

[20:39] 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.

So Paul tells us very clearly he is imprisoned. He's bound with chains as a criminal for Jesus. And he's also perhaps even thinking here of Jesus who himself was treated as a criminal.

The Jewish leaders as they brought Jesus to Pilate in John 18.30 they said if this man were doing evil or as many translations say if this man were not a criminal we would not have delivered him to you.

So they did. They delivered him up because they said he is a criminal. Jesus treated as a criminal by the Jewish authorities. And now Paul is saying I'm receiving the same treatment that my Savior did at the hands now of the Romans bound with chains as a criminal.

But he's not despairing as most people who are imprisoned probably would at this point. Paul is not. His days are numbered.

[22 : 00] The circumstances of his imprisonment are difficult. You can actually visit the place today that Paul was believed to have been imprisoned. It's called Mamertime Prison.

Pastor John MacArthur who visited it himself describes it like this. A dungeon in the ground. Literally a circular pit about 30 feet in diameter with a hole at the top a little larger than that of a manhole in the street.

That was the place of incarceration for the criminals of the time of the apostle Paul. So Paul is in a hole in the ground with very little light.

He's uncomfortable. He's likely cold and he's lonely. Later in his letter he talks about Demas this man who deserted him. He talks about others who have left as well.

He says that only Luke is with him. Paul also says that at his first defense no one came to stand by him. but all deserted him.

[23 : 06] So he's suffering. There's no doubt he's physically afflicted nearly alone there in prison sitting in that hole in the ground just waiting for the day of his execution.

But Paul is not despairing. Why? Because as he exclaims at the end of verse 9 the word of God is not bound.

So Paul is but God's word isn't. Paul is you could say stuck here in Rome though he wouldn't probably say it that way but the word of God continues to spread just as it had from the very day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to rest on the believers of the early church and Peter boldly preached the gospel to the Jews that were gathered there in Jerusalem.

what happened next? God's word continued to go forth from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and then to the ends of the earth.

We read this over and over in the book of Acts and like Paul's circumstances this is in the midst of great persecution. So Acts 6-7 says so the word of God continued to increase.

[24 : 23] Acts 12-24 says Paul himself had once before witnessed this spread of God's word when he was imprisoned the first time in Rome.

When he was under house arrest he wrote to the Philippian believers and he said in that letter chapter 1 verse 14 and most of the brothers having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

And that led Paul to rejoice because he saw the connection I suffer yes but as I suffer my brothers have become more bold to share the gospel.

He's glad he's glad to hear of this advancement of God's word this going forth of the gospel even with his own affliction. So now the second time that Paul is imprisoned in Rome we see something similar as he says the word of God is not bound.

I'm imprisoned but the word of God is not. That's fantastic. I'll take that situation. I'll gladly accept that situation if it means the salvation of others.

[25 : 43] You see Paul recognizes great purpose in his suffering. He's not languishing there in prison. He's not writing the days on the wall.

He's not wasting his time. Rather he's resting in the sovereignty of God. This is a part of God's perfect plan.

You see it there. He says therefore in verse 10 therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect. Paul recognizes the sovereignty of God in all of this.

God has purposed for him to be there in prison and God has purposed for his word to go forth and as it does sinners are saved.

Sinners who are indeed elect. Meaning as Paul says in Ephesians 1-4 chosen from before the foundation of the world predestined for adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ and all of this is according to the purpose of God's will.

[26 : 53] Yes God wills. God determines to save all those chosen by him and Paul looks at his own suffering and he sees his suffering as part of God's perfect plan to do that.

He suffers not fruitlessly not in vain he suffers for the sake of others. There's a connection there. Perhaps Paul sees something of what he described in Philippians chapter 1.

Perhaps he's hearing of the brothers growing in confidence to share the gospel as he suffers for it. Whatever it may be Paul is resting in the sovereignty of God. He recognizes God is in control and so he suffers that the elect too might obtain salvation just as he has.

A salvation that is only in Christ. So Paul is not suffering for nothing. No, God is sovereignly sending forth his word.

God is sovereignly saving the elect. God is accomplishing his perfect plans. Just as he says in Isaiah 55 beginning in verse 10.

[28 : 10] For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth making it bring forth and sprout giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater so shall my word be that goes out of my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

So Paul does not see his imprisonment as a hindrance to the advancement of the gospel. No he remembers and now he seeks to encourage Timothy with this reminder.

The word of God is not bound. Look at it. Accomplishing what God has purposed for it to do. Look at it succeeding as God sends it out.

The salvation of the elect chosen by God from eternity past. Paul can say if through my suffering God does that I'll rejoice. I'll exclaim the word of God is not bound.

[29 : 18] That is still very much happening today. Christians around the world suffering for their faith. We hear of it in Nigeria. We hear of it in China.

We hear of it in Malaysia as pastors are kidnapped off the streets. And yet through their suffering the word of God continues to go forth.

They may be bound but the word is not. They may suffer but through their suffering the gospel is spreading. And that is such a source of strength and encouragement to them and to believers around the world and it should be to us as well.

It is so good for us to hear reports on Wednesday nights of the word of God unbound spreading around the world in the midst of great opposition.

That strengthens us. That emboldens us as well. I can share Christ with my neighbor just as my brothers and sisters are sharing Christ with theirs and they're facing possible death for doing it.

[30 : 31] All across the globe God sends forth his word and it will accomplish exactly what God intends for it to do. What a wonder that he would use you and me as vessels to bring that word to others.

What a wonder that he would use you and me to fulfill his sovereign purposes that the elect might obtain salvation. Not because we're doing the saving but because God does and he's glad to use us as his mouthpiece.

He's glad to use us as his representatives. He's glad to use us as the beautiful feet that bring good news. So no matter how that good news is received, no matter what may come of us, even sharing perhaps the same end as Paul in this earthly life, we too can rest in the sovereignty of God.

So that's the second encouragement from this man about to die. And now the third and the final, run the race to the end.

Run the race to the end. Starting in verse 11. The saying is trustworthy for if we have died with him, we will also live with him.

[31 : 51] 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 likes to use that little phrase, the saying is trustworthy. He uses this multiple times in the letters that he wrote to pastors. So 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

He says it three times in his first letter to Timothy, and he says it one time in this letter right here. And it's used to draw our attention to, and to introduce us to this very concise maxim.

It might have even been a hymn that was sung in the early church. We see that it has four lines here, and each line is describing something about us, and then something about Christ.

The first two lines go together, the second two lines also go together. The first two lines, or the first half of each is rather positive, and then the second two are negative, though as we'll see the last one does have kind of this twist at the end.

[33 : 03] But all four of these together drive home the same basic point of encouragement. Run the race to the end, beginning with the first here. If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him.

Meaning, if we have died to sin, if our sins have been buried in the grave with Christ, then we can be sure we'll be raised one day from that grave, in a very physical way as well.

Yes, we've been made alive in Christ, spiritually speaking, we rejoice in that, but one day as Paul is talking in the future here, we will also live with Christ.

We will live in glorified bodies, bodies transformed to be like His. So Paul can face the prospect of death now, before him, with confidence, because as he says in the first chapter of this letter, Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

people. And Paul belongs to Christ. So Paul, reunited one day, body with soul, will live with Christ as well.

[34 : 19] And so will each of us who are in Christ. And then the second line of this hymn, he repeats something of the first. If we endure, we will also reign with Him.

So Paul builds somewhat on the future hope here. We will live, yes, us. But more than that, we will reign with Him. We see this in Revelation 22, as we're given this incredible description of the new heavens and the new earth, and of the city, the new Jerusalem, in that new creation that Christ will bring one day.

And what do we see in that garden city? Oh, God comes to dwell with us. And what will we do?

Verse 4 says, We will reign forever and ever, triumphant and victorious.

That is what the church will be. Maligned and mocked, perhaps, in this life, written off, rejected by the world, but triumphant and victorious one day.

So we endure, just as Paul did to the very end. Because here's now the alternative in the third line of the hymn. If we don't endure, but instead we deny Christ, well, Paul says, He also will deny us.

[35 : 40] As we've already heard this morning, Jesus says in Luke 12, Everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man, will also acknowledge before the angels of God.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. If we deny Him, He will deny us. He will say in that last day, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you worker of lawlessness. It can be so hard, so often, to believe that it's worth it.

That denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Christ is worth it. this is the reminder that we need in God's word. Endure to the end, and eternal life is ours.

We will reign with Christ. We will enjoy Him forever. But deny Him, and be accepted by the world now, be loved by the world now, love all that the world has to offer now.

[36 : 46] That may be pleasant for a time, but what a short time that is. And what regret, and sorrow, and pain, and shame, you will know for all of eternity when Christ denies you.

So, church, persevere to the end. Run the race to the end. And now the final line of the hymn. If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Some believe that this verse is teaching us that God remains faithful to us, even though we still struggle with sin in the Christian life.

That is true. We don't have time to go and read all of this, but go to 1 John, read 1 John, and you will see that is true.

The example of Peter. His repeated denial of Christ tells us it is true. God is indeed perfectly faithful to us when we are not perfectly faithful to Him.

[37 : 56] But that's not what this verse is saying. I read a book in seminary that was called Right Doctrine, Wrong Verse. Sometimes that happens.

We get right doctrine, but we're actually not looking at the right verse for that. So, right doctrine, but that's not what this verse is saying. This verse is teaching us another important truth, that we also need to run the race to the finish.

God remains faithful to His promises and to His people despite the faithlessness of others. And by that, I mean the faithless that Paul talks about here are not true believers.

It's those who appear to be believers, and then they fall away. It's those in the parable of the sower that believe for a little while, as Jesus says in Luke 8, and then in time of testing, fall away.

They give the appearance of having saving faith for a time, but ultimately they prove otherwise.

They are in such close association with true believers that yes, Paul can say, we, here in 2 Timothy, if we are faithless, because they are for a time counted among Christians, counted as Christians from a human perspective.

[39 : 13] Now, why do we say this? Well, consider the whole context of Paul's letter. Paul gives many examples in 2 Timothy of those who proved faithless, those who abandoned him, those who deserted him, but even worse, abandoned their faith and deserted Christ.

And he also gives many examples. He speaks to those who are faithful, as he even instructed Timothy, find faithful men to continue what you've learned and heard from me, to teach sound doctrine.

So he speaks here of those who have abandoned Christ. He speaks very generally of these people at times, and he speaks very specifically also. He names names. Chapter 1, verse 15, chapter 4, verse 10, for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. It's people like this that Paul has in mind when he talks about being faithless. It's those who turn away from Christ, Christ. And as Paul said in his first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verse 19, they've made shipwreck their faith.

So this is a warning to us, that we might not fall away and prove ourselves to be faithless. But, it's not just a warning. It is also a great encouragement to us that God remains faithful to his promises and to his people as we persevere.

[40 : 54] As we endure to the end, even as others turn away and hurt us in doing that. As Paul, he was hurt by those who abandoned their faith and deserted him.

So, even as they are faithless to Christ and faithless to us, God is not. God remains faithful. Faithful to his promises to us.

Because he can't deny himself. He can't go against his character. He can't lie. He can't change his mind. He's trustworthy. He's true. He's immutable.

He's faithful to himself. Think about it. Here is Paul sitting in prison while all of these other people who turned their back on Christ and on him are just living their lives as they please.

Demas is in love with this world. Seemingly, he's enjoying the pleasures of this world. And yet, Paul, in prison, is not dejected.

[42 : 00] Paul isn't throwing himself a pity party because God is faithful to him. Others have failed him. But God will not. People can go back on what they claim to believe.

People can go back on what they say. People can change loyalties on us. But God does not. He is eternally unchanging.

So church, he is for you. And he will never be against you. And Paul is sure of this. Even as he quotes from the Old Testament later here in chapter 2 when he says in verse 19, but God's firm foundation stands bearing this seal.

You can mark his words on this. Take it to the bank. the Lord knows those who are his. God is faithful to his people like a firm and movable foundation with the seal of approval upon it.

Even as Paul is enduring this hard trial, he knows God has not abandoned me. God has not left me even as these faithless people have.

[43 : 11] And so God will not leave you. God will not abandon you. So bear up. Press on. Run the race to the finish with your eyes fixed on Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of your faith.

So Paul exhorts and he encourages Timothy and us with these words, with this hymn, run the race to the end. Paul himself has done it.

He sets himself before us as an example at the end of this letter when he writes in chapter 4, verse 7. Look over at chapter 4, beginning in verse 7.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

And not only to me, but to all who have loved his appearing. That is the day that Paul awaits. That is the day that awaits us if we continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that we have heard.

[44 : 28] On that day, will you love his appearing? We will only love his appearing if we love him. We love seeing the one that we love.

We love, we long for his coming because we long for him. This is the classic example that you think of at the airport, waiting for the loved one to come.

You're excited when you see them and if you're not, your loved one says, what's wrong with you? Why aren't you excited to see me? Shame on me if I'm not excited to see you, my loved one. And so all the more, to an infinitely greater degree, ought we to be longing for his coming, loving his appearing because we're in love with him.

Paul talks about another possible object of our love here in 2 Timothy chapter 4, just two verses later. He shifts from talking about all who love the appearing of Christ to this man, Demas.

Demas on the last day will not love Christ's appearing because he did not love Christ. Now Paul says in chapter 4, verse 10, for Demas, in love with this present world has deserted me.

[45 : 50] Demas did not run the race to the end because Demas did not love Christ. He loved this present world. He loved all that is within this world as 1 John 2 describes it, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions.

Or as the NIV says, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does. This is what the present world has to offer.

And that is what Demas loved. Do you know what else 1 John says? This present world is passing away along with its desires. Sin is fleeting and temporary.

It gives momentary pleasure in exchange for an eternity of pain and suffering in hell. That is what Demas chose. He began the race.

He gave every appearance of being a Christian for a time, but he didn't finish the race. No, he got tired of running and he quit. Lured from the race by the desires of sin.

[47 : 00] Like a runner who's running and sees a McDonald's sign and stops off to get a Big Mac and fries. Maybe that's not all that appealing to you, but to this hypothetical runner, that's appealing.

Fleeting, enjoyable pleasure for a time. But kids, how do you think that runner would do trying to run a race with his belly full of Big Mac? Probably not even going to try again.

We're done here. I'm going to enjoy my food and go home. So it is with sin. What a terrible trade-off. Loving this present world in exchange for loving Christ and his appearing.

Loving what is passing away in exchange for the one who lives forever and gives eternal life to all who trust in him. And so Paul encourages us here, press on to the finish.

Endure. Keep running the race. The Big Mac is certainly not worth it, but all the more, sin is not worth it. Christ is. And if we run the race to the finish, we will love his appearing on that last day.

[48 : 08] So where is your heart set this morning? In love with this present passing world or in love with the eternal Son of God? Living for the pleasures of this life or looking to the pleasures of the life to come.

A life that is lived forever in the presence of God as Psalm 16 says, where there is fullness of joy. Where Psalm 16 says, at his right hand, and it's only there, at his right hand that we find pleasures forevermore.

It is that joy. It is that crown of righteousness that Paul is looking forward to as he pins these letters, these words in his final days. Sitting there in that dark, musty, cold dungeon, but he's not sitting there in despair because he sees the finish line of this great race of life and he's running with all of his might to the end and he's ready to receive the crown of life and to be received in love by his risen Savior.

So God in his word is encouraging us this morning, keep running that race as well. Stay the course, Christian. Don't get distracted by the allurements of sin.

It is hard to not get entangled by it. As Hebrews 12 says, run with endurance the race that is set before us. Looking to Jesus.

[49 : 41] Or as Paul says in 2 Timothy, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David. And Hebrews 12 says, the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The right hand of God. We've heard something about his right hand now twice. Let's remind ourselves again, what's there at God's right hand? Psalm 16 says, pleasures forevermore found at his right hand.

And at the same time, who's there at God's right hand? Hebrews 12 says, Jesus is, seated at the right hand of God. Pleasures at his right hand, Jesus at his right hand.

That makes perfect sense. Because the pleasures of God are only found in the Son of God, seated next to his Father. So look to Jesus.

Remember Jesus. Rest in knowing that he's sovereign over your life and run the race with diligence to the finish with your eyes by faith fixed on him.

[50 : 59] Because one day that faith will be made sight. And you'll see him face to face. And you will love his appearing. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we do come to you with our praises that your promises to us are true in your word that as you say, you will never leave us nor forsake us.

You are with us to the end of the age. And so we can run this race with such diligence knowing that you hold us fast. And we can look to the future even beyond this life knowing your promises in that as well.

that the crown of life awaits us for all who are in Christ. So we pray, Father, that you would do a work that you would save sinners even this morning and that they would see Christ in all of his glory that they would turn to him in faith and repentance and believe that he died for their sins and rose again that they might have newness of life.

And Father, we pray that you would build us up in our most holy faith that you would ascend us from here as those who are running the race with diligence and give us that strength by your spirit, we pray.

[52 : 11] We pray all of this in the name of Christ. Amen. Jude 24. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen.