REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST

2 Timothy 2:1-26

Key Verse: 2:8,9

"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained."

In Second Timothy chapter 1 we learned how to grow up to be a great Christian leader. The secret is that we must discover our unique gift endowed by God and fan it into flame in the Spirit of God, in the love of God, and in self-discipline. In chap­ter 2 Paul gives Timo­thy so many golden instruc­tions that it is hard to organize this chapter as a message. Rath­er, it is better for us to memorize all of them. But when we study prayerfully we learn that Paul instructs Timothy to re­member Jesus Christ and his grace. Then we can be mature servants of God.

I. Be strong in the grace of Jesus (1-13)

**First,** be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus (1). Look at verse 1. "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Verse 1 is a gold­en instruction to Timothy as well as to all of us. However, to re­mem­ber Jesus Christ and his grace is the hardest thing in the world. Fal­len men remem­ber all the bitterness and resentment inflicted by oth­ers, and never forget. When they do so, hatred grows in their hearts. In the matter of time, they hate others. For the most part, they hate them­selves. The devil loses no time to catch these people one by one and put them into the world of darkness. Many young people, when they are in deep trouble, call God's name. As soon as they are rescued by the grace of God they for­get God's grace. There is a story about the hungry ti­ger which did not know grace. He thought that he could swim better than the small frogs. So he jumped into the lake. But he was drowning. So he cried out, "Save me! I am drowning." Then a merciful old man res­cu­ed him. After a few minutes, the tiger said, "I am hungry," and ate him. This story is likened to fallen men who do not know God's grace.

We can learn from Paul how we can grow in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. When Paul was writing 1 and 2 Corinthians, he was al­ready the greatest man throughout history. When we read 1 Corinthians 15, his faith in Christianity was at the climax. With 58 verses Paul sum­marized the whole Christian faith perfectly. Calvin wrote "The Insti­tutes of the Christian Religion" covering more than 1,000 pages. His long ex­planation of Christianity is far inferior to 58 verses of Paul's theology of Christianity in 1 Corinthi­ans 15. Paul mastered the philosophy of East and West. Moreover, Paul grew in the image of God to the extent of being a good shepherd like Jesus. But Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." It meant, without the grace of God the meaning of his existence is nothing. Paul always re­membered that he was a sinner. He said in 1 Timothy 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sin­ners--of whom I am the worst." Paul became strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ when he remembered who Jesus Christ was and what his grace was morn­ing by morning.

Paul became strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ when he remembered who Jesus Christ was. Especially, he remembered that Je­sus died for his sin and shed his blood on the cross and saved him from his selfish­ness. He also remembered that Jesus appointed him as an apostle for the Gentiles. Paul was a self­ish person who could have lived a selfish life and been put into eternal condemnation. But Christ saved him from his sins. The servants of God must remember the grace that is in Jesus Christ and grow strong in his grace constantly.

**Second,** entrust to reliable men (2). Look at verse 2. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reli­able men who will also be qualified to teach others." In this verse, "reli­able men" is the same as "faithful men." Probably to most people, the first condition of choosing a son-in-law is that he must look good out­ward­ly. He also must have a good job. Most people do not see one's integrity, especially faith in Jesus. As a result, the family which was estab­lished by human outward ap­pearance or material wealth can be fragile. Last week (November 9, 1994) there was a sad story. Uni­ver­sally, mothers are happy to die for their chil­dren. That's a mother's in­stinct. This principle applies to the animal world also. But Susan Smith, who divorced once, tied up her two sons in a seat belt of a car and drove into a lake and drowned her two sons, and she got out of the lake. It was be­cause her boyfriend didn't want to marry her who has two sons born by her former husband. We cannot judge the wom­an. But we can­not deny she was a very unfaithful woman in the sight of God.

There is a problem. Usually a faithful man in God does not look like a macho man or man of sensuality. So most people, even Christians, do not recognize a faithful man, thinking that he is weird, though he is good. Even if a faith­ful man looks weird and not clever, we must choose a faithful man. Therefore, Christian leaders must have spiritual insight to see faithful men highly, more than handsome men. A faithful man does not do much all at once. But in the end, he proves that he is a faithful man, and he is a man of success and a man blessed by God. This part reminds us of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

**Third,** a Christian should be like a soldier (3-4). Look at verse 3. "En­dure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." Paul likened God's people to soldiers. It is because the children of God living in this world must fight against the power of darkness, the devil (Eph 6:12). In this spiritual warfare, Jesus Christ is our command­er-in-chief and we are his loyal soldiers. In Paul's time, persecution was very se­vere. Espe­cially Nero, the Roman Emperor, was on the throne when Christianity arrived in Rome. Nero was a man of nightmare. When he saw the great city of Rome as Emperor, it looked ugly. It was like a huge collec­tion of ghetto houses made of wood, rotting and falling apart. Nero fantasized that he could build a glorious city of Rome. They say that Nero began to set fire in the middle of the city of Rome and took down houses where residenc­es were densely crammed. Nero had to have a scape­goat. He made Chris­­tians scapegoats and committed mass murder. When Paul was in pri­son he was regarded as a criminal because he was accused by his own peo­ple, the Jews. Mainly, he was one of the Christians who were brand­ed as criminals by Nero. But Paul was very loy­al to his command­er, Jesus. He did not back away from the persecu­tions, with a spirit of martyrdom. Then fel­low Chris­tians also would not disavow Chris­tianity or run for their lives. When Paul stood firm in the midst of perse­cution, fellow Christians also stood firm against Nero's persecu­tions. It was possible for Paul because he was a loyal soldier to his com­mander, Je­sus Christ. A soldier's su­preme purpose is also to win the victory and render vic­tory to his com­mander-in-chief in order to please him. A sol­dier who is defeated is not a soldier. Paul compared Chris­tians to sol­diers in order to explain that the integrity of a Christian is loyalty.

**Fourth,** a Christian is like an athlete (5). In order to teach Christian dis­cipline, Paul compared Christians to athletes. In order to become a gold medalist in the Olympics, an athlete must discipline himself very regu­larly, overcoming his physi­cal limits. The Olympics were held in 1992, in Barcelona, Spain. The Oly­mpic Games are beautiful in many ways to watch. But they are all sec­ondary. The climax of the Olym­pics is the marathon race, ever since the Greek soldier's legend­ary race to deli­ver the mes­sage of victory, running 26 miles, 385 yards. The soldier was wounded on the way. But he could not die before delivering the mes­sage. So he ran until he could deliver the message and on the spot he died. The Barcelona Olympics were also closed by mara­thon­ers coming into the main stadi­um. A Japanese runner went to Lon­don and rested well for 10 days to overcome his jet lag. But Mr. Hwang of Korea went to see about the Barcelona Olympic stadium. He learned that the last two miles to the stadium were uphill. To a mara­thoner it was a very difficult spot. But he overcame his jet lag by prac­ticing the final uphill course until he was running by the power of train­ing beyond human limits. He won the gold medal for the marathon through intensive train­ing. The Chris­tian life is fre­quently compared to rac­ing. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." This is the perseverance of the saints.

**Fifth,** a Christian is like a hardworking farmer (6). Paul says this to teach us the hope of Christian faith. Usually farmers are known as hard­work­ing persons. When we see hardworking farmers, no one is lazy. Far­mers first spread the seeds and work hard to protect the young crops. They work hard from early morning until late night. But they are hap­py in the hope of abundant harvest. This hardworking farmer's story teaches us the hope of God.

**Sixth,** remember Jesus Christ (8-9). Look at verses 8-9. "Re­member Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a crimi­nal. But God's word is not chained." These verses tell us what we Chris­tians should do when we confront unbearable hardships. First and last of all, we must remember Jesus Christ. But usually people remember the things of the devil. As a result, they become bitter and revengeful. But Paul encourages us to remember Jesus Christ. Paul gives his own example in this. Paul's suffering was even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But Paul did not think of his present ordeal. He remem­bered Jesus who suffered and was chained like a criminal in order to save men from their sins. Then the pain of his chains subsided. Paul felt glorious, thinking that he was participating in the remaining suffering of Jesus Christ. Paul remembered Jesus' word that God's word cannot be chained. When Paul remembered Jesus Christ, God helped him to re­member God's way of ruling world history. At the present, Paul and the early Christians were in intensive persecu­tions. Paul could believe that God's word would be proclaimed to the end of the world, and finally the world was conquered by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (11-13). When we do as Paul we can win many souls to God.

II. Be an excellent Bible teacher (14-26)

**First,** how can we be excellent Bible teachers? (14-15). Look at verse 15. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a work­man who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." In order to become an excellent Bible teacher, one must prove himself to be an excellent Bible student. Recently a young man is mak­ing progress in his Bible study. Then his fellow members began to rec­og­nize him as a good Bible teacher. Next we must know how to correct­ly handle the Bible teach­ings. Even if we know a lot about the Bible, if we don't know how to present Bible teachings we cannot be ex­­cel­lent Bi­ble teach­ers. One who has not mastered the Bible cannot teach others well. Therefore, in order to handle the Bible correctly we must study the Bible and master the Bible until we can handle the Bible properly. It is imperative that the Bible study be more intensive than all other studies.

**Second,** avoid godless chatter (16-19). At that time, there were many men of big mouth. They were Sadducees and Stoics and Gnostics. Their hobby of listening to a new idea was comparable to modern football fans. Their ungodly chatter led people to be more and more ungodly. Their teachings, which appealed to the ordinary people, spread like gangrene. The main point of their teaching was that the resurrection has already taken place. They said groundless things to destroy the faith of new converts. At that time, those who did not believe the resur­rection were an absolute majority. But Paul believed that God's solid foundation stood firm, sealed with the inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

In verses 20 and 21 Paul talks about a large house in which there are many articles of many kinds. There are some for noble purposes and some for ignoble purposes. Here Paul compares a large house to a church which contains many kinds of people. But we must cleanse our­selves from ignoble things and be instruments for no­ble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

**Third,** flee from evil desires of youth (22-26). In order to be a great man in the world, a man must know how to keep himself away from an adul­ter­ous mind and from the love of money. Then in God's time God will exalt him to be a great man. A Christian leader must not only flee from evil desires of youth, he must be gentle. Even if there are many who oppose him, he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.

In this passage we learn that we must remember Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ was chained like a criminal. Our Lord suffered and died to save us from our sins and from the hand of the devil. Jesus suffered more than one can say to give us eternal life. He was raised from the dead on the third day so that he might give us the kingdom of God as our inheritance. In the midst of living in this real world, it is easy to remember the things of the devil. Therefore we must do our best to remember Jesus Christ.