

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.