

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Special Messages		Pastor/Teacher
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Remember the Risen Jesus

Remember. How often we use this word in the company of old friends. The joy we derive from reminiscing with others is a joy like no other. But how easy it is to forget—great people, great events, great truths. We live in perilous times in which we are sinfully inclined to forgetfulness...and with forgetfulness comes unfaithfulness (c.f. Jeremiah 2:32; Isaiah 57:11; Psalms 78:11, 42; 106:7). The opening verses of the second chapter of II Timothy are in essence a comprehensive exhortation to faithfulness, and the temptations to unfaithfulness by which Timothy was assailed, like today, were very numerous and very specious. Paul was not seeking to involve his young disciple unwittingly in the difficulties and dangers that surround the Christian in this world. He bids Timothy to first of all count the cost. And then he points him to a source of strength which will supply all his needs. “We call the passage an exhortation,” writes Warfield. “We might better call it, more specifically, an encouragement. And the encouragement culminates in a very remarkable sentence. This sentence is pregnant enough to reveal at once the central thought of Paul’s Gospel and the citadel of his own strength.”¹

I. PAUL’S CONDITION

This is the Apostle’s last epistle. He was in prison and facing death. The infant church had fallen upon perilous times. Not only did the church face open persecution, she had to contend with false teachers. Defection had invaded even the innermost circle of Paul’s companions (II Timothy 4:10). Now in his old age, the apostle is alone; at his first defense, all his companions forsook him (4:16). He was charged with a serious crime. Mark the significance of his own words; “...chained like a criminal.”² It seemed, at least to human eyes, that the whole fabric which the Apostle had built up at such cost of labor and pain was about to collapse. What was the old man thinking as he shivered in his cold, damp dungeon cell? Now he writes to timid Timothy (1:7) “not to be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of me his prisoner”(1:8). How could young Timothy face the difficulties and trials that Paul knew would come?

II. TIMOTHY’S SITUATION

Timothy almost certainly received this letter in Ephesus.³ What was Ephesus like? It was the capital of Pro-Consula Asia. It had Athenian culture and Asiatic paganism. It was the center of the worship of the goddess Diana (or Artemis).⁴ Ephesus was also a commercial center. Sir Wm. M. Ramsey tells us that Ephesus was a center for magical arts and practices.⁵ Ephesus was wealthy, superstitious and corrupt. It was a city of vice and a place of grave peril to the infant church that Paul had left young Timothy to pastor. “The struggle,” said Campbell-Morgan, “against almost overwhelming odds must have been fierce.”⁶ What would the old man, in the darkest hour when all the reward of fidelity to Christ seemed to be the dungeon and death, tell Timothy whose situation at Ephesus was so bleak?

III. PAUL’S CHARGE

“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David,” The word “remember” is MNĒMONEUŌ (from which we get our word MNEMONIC, to help the memory by use of

certain formulas), to call to mind, to give consideration and perceive. Note how this is stated in Matthew 16:9: “Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember (MNĒMONEUTE)...?” (c.f. also Mark 8:18 and II Peter 1:15; II Timothy 1:6). “In the case of Matthew 16:9, parallel Mark 8:17,18, memory of Jesus’ past actions should have sustained the disciple’s faith in present difficulties. And in the other two passages cited, remembering plays an important part in sustaining the life of faith.”⁷ What is Timothy to remember?

A. Jesus: His Person

Note the word order “Jesus Christ.” The emphasis falls on the first name. Paul is speaking of the actual man who was a descendant of David. Remember the Person, not some mystical, ethereal concept so popular in New Age thinking. He is Jesus (the One who saves His people from their sins [cf. Matthew 1:21]).

B. Jesus: His Work

“Remember Jesus Christ *risen...*!” Timothy must see the Cross, the death of Jesus, in order to think of Jesus risen. Why was Jesus slain? Acts 2:23 tells us that “wicked men put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross”-*but* it was according to “God’s set purpose and foreknowledge.” But note: apart from the resurrection, the cross is a tragedy of major proportion. Without the resurrection, the cross is the place where all hope goes out in hellish darkness, and all faith is eclipsed. “But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.” (Acts 2:24). The resurrection is God the Father’s “Amen” to God the Son’s “It is finished.” (John 19:30).

C. Paul’s Gospel. Note the emphatic “*my gospel*.”

“It is important for us to realize that these two things – his resurrection and his messiahship – make up the essential gospel. Paul says, ‘Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. *This is my gospel*’ (v. 8, italics added). Certainly there are other elements in the gospel (Christ’s atoning death, imputed righteousness that comes by faith alone through Christ alone, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and so on), but this is shorthand for the whole thing. ‘*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.*’

“This is the good news: Jesus Christ is the predicted, long-awaited Messiah, and he has been raised from the dead and ever lives. This is the gospel. Everything else in the gospel is implicit in and flows from these two supreme realities. As Messiah, he fulfills the cascade of Old Testament messianic prophecy and the gospel and is King of kings and Lord of lords. As resurrected Lord, all authority in heaven and earth is his (cf. Matthew 28:18). He is victor. He is all-powerful. It is this good news that Paul himself clings to as his death approaches. This is the theological reality from which he takes strength.

“We must keep before us that Paul’s command ‘Remember’ is a continuous command. Timothy is to ‘remember [and keep on remembering] Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.’ Other recollections are important, but this is *the* essential memory. This gospel memory, constantly replayed, will enable him to stand and suffer with Paul. Jesus Christ is the resurrected, living Messiah. He is everything we need for life and salvation.

“This is the theological memory that we must constantly set before us in all of its Scriptural dimensions. Jesus Christ did not come out of nowhere. He is the fulfillment of everything the Scriptures pointed to concerning the Messiah. Jesus Christ was resurrected and remains so. He lives! He is all-powerful! Keep on remembering this.”⁸

IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE CHARGE

Timothy is to draw strength from this. How so? It is not so much the resurrection itself that Paul has in mind; it is the RISEN JESUS. It is not the act of His rising, but the fact that this Jesus is *now* risen. He is alive and lives forevermore. “From this great fact,” Warfield declares, “he derives, therefore, the very phraseology with which he exhorts Timothy, with rich reference to all that is involved in Christ our Forerunner, to die with his Lord that he might also live with Him, to endure with Him that he might also reign with Him.”⁹

CONCLUSION: In the midst of the wicked world that Timothy had to confront, with all its surrounding temptations, with all the encompassing dangers, Paul charges Timothy to bear in mind in the most pressing way possible this central doctrine: “Jesus Christ has risen from the dead of the seed of David.” This is the sufficing source of abounding strength.

ENDNOTES

¹ B.B. Warfield, *The Savior of the World* (rpt. Mack Publishing, 1972), p.130.

² The KJV translates this “malefactor.” The word is KAKOURGOS, a compound of KAKON, “evil” and ERGO, “worker.” The word issued here and in Luke 23:32 ff. of the criminals who were crucified alongside of Jesus. In technical legal parlance, it was reserved for burglars, murderers, traitors and the like, cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Adams and Charles Black, 1972).

³ I Timothy 1:3 tells us that Paul left Timothy as his delegate or representative in Ephesus. This is the church that Paul warned would have to contend with “savage wolves” who would not spare the flock. “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

⁴ “Diana” is but the Latinized form of the Greek word “Artemis.” She was also known as Cybele, Ma, Mylitta and Ishtar from which the word “Easter” is derived! Her statue was a many-breasted figure, rather than the gracefully draped Greek or Roman figure. She personified the reproductive powers of all life. Interestingly enough, she was referred to as the “mother of Life” and this in turn became synonymous with “Mother Nature.” For a detailed analysis of her temple and worship, cf. R.L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harper & Row, 1986), pp. 90-91 and C.F. Pfeiffer and H.F. Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands* (Moody, 1974), pp. 357-364.

⁵ Wm. M. Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen* (rpt. Baker, 1962), p.271.

⁶ G. Campbell-Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit* IX (Pickering & Inglis LTD), p. 205.

⁷ *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* III, ed. C. Brown (Zondervan, 1982), p. 240. This nuance has been captured by Arthur S. Way who translated this verse, “Keep ever before you Jesus the Messiah—think of Him as who was raised from the dead; think of Him as the prophetically indicated King of the seed of David.” *The Letters of St. Paul* (MacMillan, 1906), p. 218.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *1 & 2 Timothy: To Guard The Deposit* (Crossway, 2000), p. 202.

⁹ Warfield, op. cit., p. 132.