

2 Timothy 2:1–13 (Part 1) • Strengthened By the Grace That Is In Christ

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Here we are in 2 Timothy. So open your Bible please, to 2 Timothy. We're going to make our way through this book. We are in chapter two and we're going to take the first 13 verses. So 2 Timothy chapter two, verses one through three, I'm reading out of the ESV, which is the English Standard Version.

And it goes like this, “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,² 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.³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the Word of God is not bound!¹⁰ 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.¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him;¹² if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us;¹³ if we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself.”

Stop there. Let's pray.

Father, as always, when we dig into the Scriptures, it is needful for us to come humbly before Your throne and to recognize that need and say, LORD, we need You to speak to our hearts. We need to be given ears to hear and a heart to receive.

Father, fill us with Your Spirit and enable us to take from these verses what You have for us today. LORD, You feed us from Your Word every time we get into It and we need to be fed today. We need to be Spiritually nourished, and we pray

that You would do that today through these words. And we thank You Father, in Jesus' precious Name, amen. Amen.

Once again, I'll remind you that this is a letter from the apostle Paul to his young protégé, Timothy. Paul is in Rome in prison. He knows that he is about to die soon. And so he's writing this final letter to Timothy, and it is a letter of reminder and exhortation.

Timothy is in Ephesus, and he's there serving in the church, helping to get the church established and do what is needful to really strengthen and encourage the Believers there.

And you know, this final letter from Paul to Timothy is just what you would expect it to be. A lot of quick reminders and exhortations. He doesn't spend a whole lot of time developing any one particular thought. He really kind of gives a rapid fire sort of an approach to the giving him those reminders and so forth.

And the first couple of verses speak directly from someone like an apostle to a man who is in a position of leadership in the church. And he says, first of all, in verse one, *"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* There is a great need for strength in the body of Christ.

There's a great need for leaders to be strengthened in the body of Christ, but that strength, Paul says here, comes about through the grace of God, and that's sort of an interesting concept. And we wonder how does the grace of God strengthen us? Well, in order to understand it, we really need to kind of remind ourselves of the Biblical definition of grace.

Grace:

Unmerited favor (i.e. strength, ability) from God given to the Believer, enabling him or her to be or to do whatever is required in keeping with the calling or directives of the Lord.

So here's what I came up with: grace is unmerited favor. That means you didn't earn it. And that favor could come in many different forms, such as strength or ability. And it's given from God, given to the Believer, enabling him or her to be or to do whatever is required in keeping with the calling or directives of the Lord. Right?

God gives grace to whatever calling He's given to you. So imagine you are called by God to go work in an orphanage where there are hundreds of small

kids who've been through traumatic circumstances— lost their parents, seen things that children shouldn't see. And you're there to minister to those kids. That would be a very challenging sort of an endeavor, I would think. Well, if God calls you into that position, He's going to give you the grace to deal with that sort of a ministry.

And sometimes we look from the outside at what other people are doing. And we say, I don't know how in the world they can do that. I don't even know how they can sleep at night. I've had people say that to me about being a pastor. I don't know how you can be a pastor and deal with all the drama and all the stuff that people go through in their lives and the things that you have to do. And still you know, you're sane, you know you haven't pulled all your hair out.

And you know, it's grace. I say the same thing about you and the things that you've been given to do. I think to myself, how in the world can you do that? But you have the grace. I have the grace. Where God calls us, He gives grace, which is strength to do. Okay?

So Paul says to Timothy, “Be strengthened in the grace,” which is the power to do. And that is such an important thing for all of us to understand. But here's the important part; it's not automatic. God's strength, or the strength that comes through grace, is not automatic. Otherwise Paul wouldn't have had to remind Timothy to lay hold of it. He would just say, well good thing you've got that strength that comes from grace. There you go, buddy. Have a good time. Right?

No, he (Paul) has to exhort him (Timothy) in this first verse, for him (Timothy) to do it, to take it; to lay hold of it. Now you might say, well why does he have to remind him to do that? Well, because you have to understand people, all that we have from God, we have by faith. You get it?

All that we have from God, we have by faith. There's a problem though. We have this stinker of an enemy who is constantly challenging our faith to trust God for the things that He's given. And the way the enemy of your soul does that, is he gets you to focus on your problems and on your circumstances. He gets you to look at those.

He tries to get your view, your vision, if you will, away from God and onto your problem. And you guys know what happens when you focus on your problems, right? They get bigger... and badder... and more threatening. And when that happens, when you are fixated on your problem and you're just going, oh my God, how am I going to live? How am I going to survive?

Doubt begins to enter into your mind and doubt that God is going to provide; that's the doubt. And then doubt always gives way to fear and *fear is the opposite of faith*. So we stop trusting God.

So Paul knows, when he writes to Timothy, there's all kinds of things coming in front of Timothy's vision that the enemy is going to use to get Timothy to focus on those things; taking his focus away from God the Father, putting it on his problems, and suddenly, that grace that gives strength is going to be gone.

Because... that grace comes by faith, that strength comes by faith. And when faith is challenged, we kind of just, we kind of just let go. So what do we [have] ~~get~~ to do? We've got to resist the temptation. We've got to resist the temptation of the enemy to get you to look at just your problem.

[8:37] You know, when people sometimes come to me with their issues, they want me to pray for them or whatever, but they'll tell me about their problem. It could be a marriage problem, it could be— it could be anything; relational problems, health problems, you name it. I've got a problem, you know?

The question I always want to ask is, where's God in your problem? Where does the Lord, where does the Lord exist, within the context of your problem? Have you— have you even factored Him into the equation yet? Or is it just your problem that you're seeing? You know.

And that's often the situation. And I know that because I'm just like you, I can do the very same thing. So, you know, we have to really resist the temptation to look just at our problem and we have to— we have to— force ourselves to look at the goodness and the faithfulness of God.

I loved how this morning in our worship time we were singing about God's faithfulness. Good grief, I got through worship and I was like, I don't even need to teach. The— all those lyrics were so beautiful, I just loved worship this morning. So, so nice.

Anyway, Paul goes on. Look with me in verse 2. He goes on to exhort Timothy and he says, "*And what you have heard from me,*" and by the way, what Timothy heard from Paul, that's been written down in these letters that make up the majority of the New Testament. So for you and me, it's really the Bible, it's the New Testament. He says, "*What you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who then will be able to turn around and teach others.*"

So what Paul is telling Timothy, and remember, Paul knows that he is about to go to be with the Lord; his time on earth is coming to a close. So he says, Tim, I want you to take the message that God gave me, that gospel of Jesus Christ, and I want you to commit it to other men— that they would pass it along.

But did you notice that there is a special word that he (Paul) uses when he says, as you raise up men to carry on this message, there's something they need to be. What is it? Faithful. Did you catch that? *Faithful*. They need to be— he says, “*entrust this Word to faithful men.*”

Why is that important? Why is it important that he would specify “*faithful men*”? Well, because the message needs to be faithfully conveyed. And a faithful man is going to convey it faithfully.

And what that means is he's not going to compromise it, he's not going to alter it, and he's not going to make apologies for it— which is what we see happening in a lot of the world today. We— you know, we've decided that some of the Word of God isn't really politically correct you know, because it talks about this or it talks about that.

And so we need to kind of, you know— well we're not going to read that part there, or we're going to kind of change the gender stuff here you know, and we're going to kind of move it around and alter it a little bit because, you know, we're a little bit— we're smarter today than they were back then.

Which is a bunch of bunk. The Word of God needs to be passed along by faithful men. It needs to be done faithfully. In other words, this is what we've got. This is what the Bible says. I'm not going to make apologies for it. I'm not going to change it. I'm not going to twist it, turn it into a pretzel, so that I can make it work for you.

Because you know, the Word of God is inherently offensive. And that doesn't mean we go around and enjoy offending people, but it's offensive. Jesus is offensive. He is literally referred to in the Bible as the Rock of Offense (1 Peter 2:8). Did you know that? And people stumble over Him all the time. Yeah, the gospel of Jesus is offensive.

Because you know what it tells people? You're not good enough. You're not good enough to get to Heaven on your own. Sorry, Charlie; it ain't going to happen. You are lost in your sin, and there's nothing you can do about it.

You tell that to a modern person with modern woke sensibilities, they're going to say, well, I never! Well, they probably won't say it that way, but that's something from my 1950's movie collection. But you know what I mean. It's going to be offensive to people.

You're telling, you're telling me, you know what, you're— you just called me a sinner. That's abusive.

No, you see, the Bible calls you a sinner. You've got a problem, take it up with God. I'm not going to apologize. We have to give people the real message. You're lost in your sin and there's nothing you can do about it.

Jesus came and He bore your sin. Because somebody had to pay. That's the message of the gospel. Somebody had to pay and Jesus came and did the paying for you. And if you embrace what He did on the cross; put your confidence in His death, burial, and resurrection, you will be saved, forgiven of your sin.

I like that message, but it is offensive to some people. So we need people who are going to give us the whole counsel of God's Word. And by the way, that's what I try to do every week. Well, I've been trying to do for almost 31 years by teaching through the whole Bible, not just giving you verses that I like: *Here's another verse that I like....*

We go through the whole Bible— Genesis to Revelation— and there's safety in that you see, because when you take the whole Bible together it autocorrects itself from any kind of weird, wacky, crazy, aberrant doctrines that might potentially crop up by fixating on one particular verse, which is, you know, kind of wonder.

Well how do these prosperity teachings kind of get started, you know, where all they talk about is God wants you rich and God wants you healthy. And it's all, you know, the Word Faith movement and stuff like that.

How does that even get going? Well, it gets going by taking a couple of verses and fixating on them to the exclusion of the rest of God's Word. They haven't *faithfully* shared the whole counsel of God's Word, you see, and so they get off— they get off balance.

They get off track and that's, you know, when I say those words, autocorrect, I know you hate that in terms of text messaging on your phone because it makes you text things to people that are sometimes very embarrassing. I get that.

But when the Bible autocorrects by taking the whole counsel of God's Word, that's a good thing... because it corrects you from getting off on a tangent and thinking or believing something that really isn't supported by the counsel, you know, of God's Word. So anyway, you can kind of see how important this is that we *faithfully* pass along what God's Word has to say.

Now, as we get into the next few verses, verses 3 through 6 the apostle is going to use some metaphoric examples to give to Timothy to kind of help him understand his role as a church leader. And you know, examples are always good. Jesus did it a lot. He told stories, you know, about people going out to plant a field or fishermen going out to fish and throwing their nets in the water.

And those were things that the people could readily understand. So Paul is using the same kind of a— sort of an idea. And he begins with the picture of a soldier in the military. And in verse 3, if you look with me again in your Bible, it goes like this, "*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*"

And that's Paul's way of saying to Timothy, when you go into the military and you find yourself in warfare, you're going to be suffering to some degree. Well, just going into the military is suffering because you're suffering the absence of your family members. You're suffering the absence of a great deal of what you took comfort in in everyday life. And you don't have those comforts now.

So there's an element of suffering just being away from your family, and then you get thrust into a wartime situation. And now there's another level of suffering. But the important thing that, as a Believer, we understand that this is part of what it is to be a Christian in a dark and very oppositional world to our heart and beliefs.

The world is opposed to what we believe. They don't like it at all. And they don't like you for believing it. So you're in a warfare type of situation. And Paul is saying to Timothy, you need to expect it and embrace it. And the reason that's an important thing to say to somebody is otherwise, they're going to think, what's this?

What am I going ...? I signed up to be a Christian. I didn't think it was going to come with all this junk. What's all this? What's all this fallout? I didn't know people were going to start hating me.

No, that's part of it. They hated Jesus. Remember what Jesus said? "*If they hated Me, just remember or (Pastor corrects himself) if they hate you, just*

remember, they hated Me first,” (John 15:18). Right? So, He told us, this is what life is going to be like.

But then he (Paul) goes on to say, further to Timothy, related to that soldier picture. He says, no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the One who enlisted him, which is Jesus Himself. So carrying on this illustration, Paul reminds Timothy that there are a great many things in the life of a pastor or leader in the church that could potentially distract him or her from their ministry.

Whatever your ministry may be. Maybe a woman who heads up a women's ministry or a pastor or Sunday school teacher—it doesn't matter what your ministry may be, perhaps to the homeless or helping people in difficult situations. There's all kinds of distractions in the world. And he says here that when you're involved as a soldier, you're very careful not to get involved in civilian activities or affairs.

And that simply means things that are not, non-soldier kinds of activities. You know? In other words, you have to kind of focus and you know that there's things that you're going to have to give up because you're in the military. To use that metaphor.

You know, I was made to understand that back in Britain in the— in like the 1940s during World War II, they used to have a saying when they would talk about; how life had changed and how they were no longer able to enjoy the comforts and pleasures that they had enjoyed prior to the war.

They would simply use the statement, “There's a war going on.” And that was all they needed to say. It's like, “Hey, how long has it been since you've been to a theater?”

“Well, you know, there's a war going on.”

So that was their phrase to say we're living with less right now. We're dealing with sacrifices in life right now. Why? Because there's a war going on.

And you know, that's kind of what Paul is relating to Timothy here in terms of his calling into the ministry; Timothy, there's a war going on so you want to be very careful not to become distracted by the temptations of the world, because there's all kinds of things that you can get involved in, right, that aren't germane to your personal calling in the Lord. You know?

Personally, I haven't had to deal a whole lot with distractions because I'm so boring. I mean, I just, God— I'm a teacher and that's all I am. I tell people I've got a one string guitar and I enjoy doing it. So, you know, I mean, there've been, there've been some distractions over the years. But anyway, I just kind of like being boring. (Pastor laughs) Anyway.

You know, this idea of kind of being called into active service and learning to sacrifice, live a sacrificial life, is something Paul also mentioned when he wrote to the Romans. Let me put this on the screen for you so you can see it.

Romans 13:11-12 (ESV)

... the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Romans 13, he says, “*The hour has come for you to wake from sleep, for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.*” You see, all the distractions in the world can really cause us to fall into kind of a Spiritual slumber. And Paul says, “it's really time to wake up because, you know, the coming of the Lord *is nearer now than when we first believed,*” he says, “*the night is far gone, the day is at hand. So then let us cast off all those other distractions,*” which he refers to there in that passage as, “*works of darkness and put on instead the armor of light.*”

And let's live this life as if, you know, and he's using that same picture of a military soldier by saying, let us put on the armor of light. Let's put on the armor of a soldier of the Lord, and let's move through this life in a way that is not involved in all of the distractions that the world is involved in.

And the reason that Paul gives Timothy to do that is he says that a good soldier wants to please his commanding officer, “*the One who enlisted him.*” He (the good soldier) wants to please Him (Jesus, the One who enlisted him). He has a desire to please his commanding officer. Right?

So next (verse five), Paul uses the example of an athlete. He says, “*An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.*” And this is a really simple picture that he's giving. You don't get a gold medal by making up your own rules: I don't really have to jump that far; I only have to jump that far.

No, those aren't the rules. You know. Well, so what is Paul saying to Timothy when he says that, “*an athlete is never crowned unless he competes according to the rules.*”

That's pretty simple really. There are rules in life— and we can't ignore them. God has put certain rules, we even call some of them laws, in place. And you can't ignore them. You just— you can't. For example, the Bible says that what a man sows, which means plants; he'll reap, he'll harvest. And you can't ignore that.

In fact, Paul says to the Galatians (6:7), “*God will not be mocked, what you sow, you're going to reap.*” And if you try to ignore that and go by your own rules, you're going to have trouble.

And you know, the Bible also gives us moral rules too, doesn't it? Like, you know, there's a moral law in the Ten Commandments. And yeah, I know we don't keep the Ten Commandments to be saved. We understand grace. We understand that we're saved by grace *through faith*; not by keeping rules and laws. So we're not talking about salvation here. But we're still talking about moral rules that God has laid down. And those moral laws are just as much enforced as they ever were.

You know, we're not to murder. We're not to steal. We're not to lie. We're not to commit adultery. Those are there for us to obey. And you can't be a successful athlete if you don't obey the rules. Why does he use the picture of an athlete? Well, because many times throughout the scriptures, Paul refers to our Christian life as a race. Running the race. We're all running the race. Whether you, whether you want to or not, you're in a race. It's a marathon. It's not a sprint.

And so because we're in that race, we have to follow the rules. There are rules, and you're going to get in trouble if you ignore them, you know? So, Paul reminds Timothy of that.

And then here, he lastly uses the example of a farmer to make a point about Christian service. And he says, “*It is the hard working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.*” And here he's talking about the diligence and hard work of a farmer to be able to enjoy the fruit of his labors. He should be the first. Hey, if he did the hard work, he should be the first to enjoy the share of the crops, you know, the in-gathering.

But what is it that you see in all these pictures; the picture of the soldier, the picture of the athlete, the picture of the farmer, what do you see in all of those?

There's something consistent running through them. And that is this whole issue about *diligence*. It is the *diligence* of the soldier to please his commanding officer and not to get involved in all kinds of distractive sort of things. It is the *diligence* of the athlete to play according to the rules, to understand that I'm going to get in trouble if I try to do this thing on my own. And there's the *diligence* of the farmer to work hard so that he might enjoy that share of the crops. And that speaks of single mindedness and hard work. And that's what Paul was trying to pass along to Timothy.

It's not something that's going to happen just because you're like, Hey man, you know, want to hear about Jesus? It was hard work. Paul worked hard. He worked hard at what he did. And he's trying to pass that along to Timothy as well.

And I frankly love what he says in verse seven. Look in your Bible there. He says there, "*Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding and everything.*" Those are interesting words.

Particularly that phrase, "*Think over what I say.*" You know how we would say that today? Meditate on the Word. Meditate on the Word. And there's a promise that goes along with that: and the Lord will give you understanding. Now don't get weirded out about the word meditation, okay?

Some of you might have heard, you know, if you're old as me, you remember that there was a time in the 70s, you know, and everybody was into meditation, like transcendental meditation, wow man. It was very stupid, but it was all Eastern based religious kind of stuff. And what it did is it kind of, it turned people off to the idea of meditation. It made people think that the word meditation was kind of a bad word. But there's nothing bad about meditating on God's Word, on the Scripture.

And when we talk about meditating, we're simply talking about thinking deeply about something. Okay? That's what he tells Paul Timothy, think over what I say, spend some time thinking about it. Do you know that meditation is largely a lost discipline today?

We've just kind of had to tell God, well sorry, we're kind of too busy. I mean, we got a lot of things going on, so we really would like to spend some time meditating on the Word, but we just can't, sorry, because we're busy people. We've got to get places, go there fast.

What do you think God would say to that?

[God's reply to us] That's why you lack understanding. You have taken a cursory reading of the scripture and you have not pondered it. You have not thought deeply about it. And I've not been able to increase your understanding.

When I talk about meditating, I'm talking about taking a verse or two, thinking about it throughout the day. Maybe writing it down on a piece of paper, putting it on your dash while you drive to and from work, spending time thinking about it during the day and just asking the Lord, enlarge my understanding. He'll do it. He will do it.

We Christians need to get back to pondering and thinking deeply about the Word of God. We have paid the price for not doing it. And the price is a lack of understanding. So it's an important thing.

Then look with me now at verses eight and following. Paul says, "*Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead,*" but then he throws in this other phrase, "*the offspring of David.*" Did you catch that?

He often refers to Jesus, and talks about His resurrection, related to His death on the cross. But this is, I think this is the only time I can remember when he connects the resurrection or the resurrected Jesus as being the offspring of David.

What does he do in that phrase? He connects the Old Testament and the New Testament, doesn't he?

He bridges the two; Jesus is the offspring. We learn about David in the Old Testament. We learn about the promise that God gave to David, that the Messiah would come from his lineage in the Old Testament. And so now Paul with this statement about his gospel of the risen Christ, [who is] the offspring of David; he connects the two.

And that's an important thing for you and me to remember because we have to keep in mind, you can't separate the Old Testament from the New Testament. You can't even separate Judaism from Christianity. The world sees those as two different 'world religions.'

They are not. Christianity is the continuation of Judaism.

It is a continuing story that God began in the Old Testament. The Old Testament virtually points to Jesus... and then we have the revelation of the coming of Messiah in the New Testament.

But there are a great many prophecies in the Old Testament that have yet to be fulfilled, a great many prophecies. So the Old Testament is still connected to Jesus and His coming and God's plan of redemption and so forth.

And you know, we tried to show that connection in years past. Some of you guys who've been around for a long time might remember that we used to have a table right back here. And on that table sat a Bible and a cross, a wooden cross, and then a Jewish menorah. Anybody remember that? In case you don't, in case you're kind of newish around here, I'll put it up.



I found a picture during a service. That's what it looked like. So we had this Jewish menorah, which is that candle holder thingy there, next to the cross. Now that's still on some of our videos. That's from 2014, that picture right there. That was the last study in the book of Matthew on our third pass through the Bible.

And so it's still on the internet and people write us, actually pretty frequently, and they say, why do you have that Jewish menorah? And they kind of wonder if it maybe makes us weird. And I get a chance to explain to people (well, first of all) it's not there anymore because we kind of redesigned things.

But it was there because we wanted it to be there. It was there because we wanted to *communicate* the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We wanted people to know *Jesus was Jewish. He was born into a Jewish family, Jewish traditions.* And the nation of Israel is still very much on God's prophetic radar.

You know, I mean, we wanted people to know that. And so, I get the opportunity to explain that every so often. And Paul wanted Timothy to know of that connection too. So he talks of the risen Christ, the offspring of David. And that's why Paul went on to say, and you know, "I'm willing to suffer for this gospel because it is the very power of God to bestow eternal life."

And then the final three verses of what we're looking at here this morning, 11, 12 and 13, Paul says (verse 11), "*The saying is trustworthy.*" And then he goes on to give this saying, which— and we don't know, really where it came from. It could have been a hymn of the early church. They could have been singing this, or it might've just been a saying, you know, that they would repeat.

But it went like this. Four things: "*If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, He remains faithful— for He cannot deny Himself.*"

Let me just run through these very quickly. "*If we have died with Him, we'll also live with Him.*" This is not talking about physical death. He's not talking about martyrdom, even though Paul was looking at martyrdom in the face. He's talking about the death we share with Jesus when we come to Him.

Do you guys understand that when we come to Jesus, we share in His death and resurrection? And I'm not talking about a future resurrection. We are raised... today. We die today and we are raised today. We die to the old life and we're raised to the new life, which is to live for God. We picture that every time we baptize somebody in water.

It's a beautiful picture. Do you know water baptism is all about identifying with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. That's what it's there for. It's a public declaration of my identification with Him. That's why Jesus was baptized by John. He was identifying with you. Then you identify with Him, when you come to Him by faith.

So we take somebody in the water, in the waters of baptism, we lay them back, picturing death. We put them under the water, picturing burial. We bring them up out of the water, picturing resurrection. This is identification, but that death is a critical element because again, we die to the old man (or the old woman, as the case may be); the old person, the old sinful past, and we are raised up to live a new life in Christ Jesus.

That's what Paul is talking about in this particular section. And then the second statement in verse 12, he says, "*if we endure, we will also reign with Him.*" And that statement reminds us that all the difficulties and challenges you go through are worth it. Right? Because there's a reward on the other side for staying faithful.

Paul wrote about this when he wrote to the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians chapter 4. He says, I love this,

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV84)

... our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

Isn't that a smack in the face? We think our problems are like, you know, the worst. And I dare say the apostle Paul went through issues and problems and challenges that you never will.

Have you been beaten three times? Whipped? Have you been beaten with rods? Have you been shipwrecked and spent a day and a night in the ocean floating on debris? Have you gone without food and all the other things that Paul went through? Guess what he calls them? "*Our light and momentary troubles.*"

You want to smack him, don't you? What do you mean *light and momentary*? Isn't that something? We're going through the worst thing in the world, and he comes along and goes, Ah, it's a bump in the road. Compared. *Compared to the glory that will be revealed.*

Guys when you, when I see the glory that is going to be revealed, and we'll see it one day, we are going to shout like we've never shouted before. And we're finally going to say, (Pastor sighs with satisfaction) ahhh, it was worth it. Yep (smiling from ear to ear).

Third statement, "*if we deny Him, He also will deny us.*" This is really pretty simple. Jesus said the same thing. Let me show you.

Matthew 10:33 (ESV)

... whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 10, "*... whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who's in Heaven.*"

I've had people write to me in the past and say, "Pastor Paul, I think I'm lost and going to Hell."

I'll say, "Why?"

"Because I denied the Lord back when I was 14 years old. I got mad. I really got mad. I prayed for something and He didn't give me what I— and I got... and I denied Him. I denied Him in front, in front, of a bunch of people. I think I'm going to Hell."

No, Jesus isn't saying that if you, in a moment of anger or frustration, you say things at some point that that's it for you; it's one strike and you're out. It's not what He's saying at all. Listen, if that was the case, the apostle Paul would have never become the apostle Paul because he vehemently denied Jesus Christ. And he went on to become the Apostle to the Gentiles and write the majority of the New Testament. So, no, you're not out of the game.

You know why? You know how Paul got to be the apostle Paul? He repented. And he became a Believer. And it's the same thing with you and me. Sure, many of us have probably at some time in our life said something stupid, where we denied the Lord. But we came back to Him. We apologized, we repented, we turned away.

And He forgave us. And we moved on. So please understand what that verse is not saying. Alright?

And then finally, the fourth statement; which is really more about God. It says, "*if we are faithless,*" and that's not talking about somebody who turns from the faith. Okay? We're not talking about somebody who becomes apostate or rejects Christ; we're talking about Believers who mess up.

Because do you understand that when we mess up, it is an act of faithlessness? Okay? Christians can be faithless and still be saved. I've done it many times. So he (Paul) says, "*if we are faithless, He remains faithful—*" Why? "*because He cannot deny Himself.*" And what that means is He (Jesus) is perfectly, utterly faithful. He can't be anything otherwise.

Isn't that interesting? See, I can, I can act faithfully. I can do something that is faithful. In other words, if I tell you I'm going to do something, and then I follow through with it, well that was a faithful thing on my part. Great, wonderful. But that doesn't make me a faithful person.

It means I can, I can act faithfully sometimes. I can also act faithlessly. I'm very capable of that as well. Here's the point. Jesus cannot, *cannot be faithless*. He has to be faithful because it is part of His essential nature and He cannot deny who He is.

Do you understand there's one thing God cannot do? He can't change. God says in the Word, "I'm not a man that I would change." (Malachi 3:6. Many OT and NT verses say God does not change, including Numbers 23:19, Hebrews 6:18.) We call that theologically, His immutability. He's immutable. That means He doesn't change. God never changes. Right?

So what that means, and by the way, that's good news. You don't want a God who changes. You want to be able to go and to depend on Him, that what He says, He will follow through with. Right?

There's some wonderful promises. You know, Joshua [in Joshua 21:45], when he's exhorting the nation of Israel, and they came into the land, he goes, you know what? *Not one, not one promise of God has failed to be kept*. Not one promise has hit the ground. Every single promise He made, He has kept.

That, Christians, is faithfulness, okay? God is true to His Word. He can't be otherwise. It is impossible for God to be otherwise. I want you to remember that the next time you're crying out to Him in prayer, okay? And you're asking the Lord to deliver you, or help you, or come to your aid in some particular way.

I want you to remember something, and I think it would be good for you to say this in your prayer: God, You are faithful and You can't be otherwise. And so I'm coming to You in prayer, and I'm trusting in Your faithfulness— that You, God, are faithful. In fact, let me end with an Old Testament passage.

Deuteronomy 7:9 (ESV)

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love...

Deuteronomy chapter 7, "*Know therefore,*" and I love that; there's strength to that "*Know therefore.*"

Know what? "*That the Lord your God is God,*" and that has a lot of implications, such as He is the faithful God, "*who keeps covenant and steadfast love.*"

A covenant is a system of promises, and God keeps His promises. Not one single promise that God ever made will not be kept. He's faithful. He's the only One you know Who is perfectly faithful, and you can take that to the bank. Amen?

Let's stand together. After I close in prayer, we'll have some people down front here. We call them our prayer team, and they will be available to pray with you should you have anything kind of heavy on your heart today that you need prayer for or about. And they would be— they would love to pray with you, and so take advantage of that.

Father, thank You so much for Your Word— the power of it and the exhortations that we see in it to challenge us to live closer, to love You, to serve You, to be filled with You; to meditate on the Word of God, to walk in the belief that You are faithful and cannot be otherwise, and that we have been called into battle as soldiers, but You are there to give us the grace and strength and ability to walk out what is before us.

Thank You Lord for these wonderful reminders. We pray that You'd fill us with Your Spirit. Continue to teach us and enlarge our understanding, for we ask it in the Name of Jesus Christ. And all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.