

2 Timothy 2:11-13

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[0 : 00] Let us resume our studies on the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, chapter 2, verses 11 to 13.

2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 11. He cannot deny himself.

Now we notice that in this letter, Paul is encouraging Timothy to steadfastness and to courage as a Christian leader.

He is exhorting him to face, bravely, his calling. He reminds him that Jesus Christ is the source of his strength and he is to strive to become a better Christian day by day, emulating the dedication and the commitment of the soldier and of the athlete and of the farmer.

Above all, he is to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Christ of history, reigns as universal law.

[2 : 12] He who died is now alive at the right hand of God the Father. And he is never to forget that the Lord who commissioned him to preach the gospel will see to it that that gospel never fails.

Though he was a prisoner himself writing this letter facing death from the prison in Rome, he knew that the gospel for which he was imprisoned was not bound.

And he was ever prepared to suffer for the sake of that gospel because of the glorious purpose that God had in view for it. It was the means appointed by God for bringing his elect people to a knowledge of salvation.

And the means appointed by him to feed their soul and to bring them ultimately to the eternal glory which was provided for them and prepared for them by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now he says, remember these things. And remember also this saying, if we be dead with them, we shall also live with them.

[3 : 39] If we suffer, we shall also reign. If we deny, he will deny us. If we believe not yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.

Now when Paul refers at the beginning of this verse, verse 11, to this faithful saying, we recognize that this was one of the sayings current in the first century Christian church.

You know yourselves that the church and the congregations met in various places and that they were dependent upon the word of God being read to them and the word of God being committed by them to memory.

And in the course of time, as the great fundamental teachings of the Christian faith were being brought together, they were committed, some of them were committed to sayings, short, pithy, phrases brought together that could be memorized quite easily in the same way as the doctrines of grace have been brought together in our own shorter catechism and in forms in which it is possible for children to commit them to memory.

There were such sayings current in the Christian church at the time that Paul wrote this letter. And he makes use of this one.

[5 : 34] He made use of five of them, as you know, in what we call the pastoral epistles, the letters to Timothy and Titus. And here we come across another of them. Remember, he says, the saying which is at the heart of the faith of the Christian church of which you are a member and over which you are a minister and now which you are going to lead after my demise.

Remember, he says, this saying, and then he quotes it. If we be dead with him, we shall also reign, live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign.

If we deny him, he will deny us. If we believe not, he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself. Now, you will see how these sayings were brought together.

Those of you who know the Bible well will be able to extract these sayings from their context. For example, in the letter that Paul wrote to the church at Rome, the letter he wrote to the Corinthians

and the letter he wrote to the Colossians, embrace and all have these same words.

If we be dead with him, we shall also live. For example, remember how he put it to the church at Colossae, speaking of the Christians, ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

[7 : 04] He said the same thing in the letter to the Romans, chapter 6. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. These are words which we write here tonight that he himself again wrote to the church at Rome in chapter 8 of his letter.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. They all knew that Jesus had used these words as we write here tonight in Matthew chapter 10.

And the church had committed that saying of Jesus to memory. He had said, if we deny him, he will deny us.

And it was also known that the Bible emphasized the next one, that if we continue, if we be faithless, yet he is not. He abideth faithful.

This was written right across the pages of Holy Root, the faithfulness of God. And also this next statement, God cannot deny himself.

[8 : 17] There are some things that God cannot do. And far from attributing weakness to because of that, he only emphasized his immutability, his unchangeableness.

He cannot deny himself. So all these things, all these truths were brought together in this short saying that Paul uses to remind Timothy and to encourage him to steadfastness, to Christian endurance, to courage in the face of conflict.

Remember what this saying emphasizes. What then does the saying emphasize? Well, in the first place, we have here a reference to what someone has referred to as an past occurrence with abiding consequences.

That is, we are dead with Christ and we live with him.

Now, we have to ask ourselves what exactly this means.

[9 : 39] At face value, some might be tempted to think that what Paul is saying to Timothy is this, if you are to live with Jesus, you must die literally for Jesus.

Well, of course, we know that there were many people at that time and since who were not martyrs to the Christian faith, for the Christian faith.

People who weren't put to death because of their allegiance to Jesus. Some were. But many weren't. So, it is not a reference to literal, physical, natural death.

As though he was saying, you really must die naturally, physically, if you are to live in the world to come with Jesus.

You see, if you look at the next part of the saying, if we suffer, we shall reign. That's a reference to the world to come. Reigning. Reigning.

[10 : 44] Awaits the people of God reigning with Christ. Their responsibility at the present time is to live. Not to reign. But to live.

So, death and life are brought together here. In what way? Well, it is what the New Testament speaks of as union and communion.

Paul writes in the Romans in chapter 6, to the Colossians in chapter 3, to the Ephesians in chapter 2, and here again in the use of this saying, brings before us that when a person becomes a believer, that he is united by faith to Jesus Christ, we are, as the Shorter Catechism tells us, united by faith in our effectual calling.

Now, when that happens, something else happens. We, he says, the church at Rome, we die.

The church at Colossae, you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. That's the meaning of death here.

[12 : 12] The faith that unites us to Jesus means that in another sense, we become dead to something else.

To what? We become dead to sin, he tells us in Romans. We become dead to the way of life that we lived.

We become dead to the past. We are aligned. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

We are risen to newness of life, he tells the church at Ephesus. All these things illustrate for us, shed light for us upon the meaning of being dead with him, that we may live together with him.

And notice the union. We are dead with him and we live with him. It is something that has taken place in the life of the believer.

[13 : 21] And unless you want to tear the pages of the Bible, these pages of the Bible, there is no other way in which you can explain these words. Time and time again, we are told that we are dead to sin.

We are not to live any longer therein. Sufficient is a time that has passed your life when you lived like the other Gentiles. You are dead.

Your life is hid with Christ and God. You are new creatures with Christ Jesus. You are raised to newness of life. It is a spiritual reality in the life of these people.

It isn't that sin is dead and then. It isn't as we saw earlier on. It isn't that there aren't times when they would find as it were motions in their own lives towards sin.

It isn't as though they are so dead that sin can't touch them and that sin can't affect them. That's not what the New Testament means at all.

[14 : 27] How could a man who said this then go on to say oh wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me? From this body of death. This sin that plagues me.

I want to do good but often the good that I want to do is in what I that's not what I do but the evil that I don't want to do. Sin is in my members. It is warring against this principle of life and this principle of grace.

But you see as to serving it and living in it and obeying it and being a slave to it he was dead. his relationship his relationship to it was altered completely. He was alive now to God or alive to Christ Jesus.

Remember how he put it again in Corinthians? If any man be in Christ he's a new creature. The old has gone and the new has come. I live with him.

[15 : 27] I live by faith in him. I'm in communion with him. The union that was forged by faith with Christ means that I live a life of fellowship with him.

A life of communion with the Lord. Now he says you remember what is said. As you face as you face a difficult future a difficult task you remember that your union and your communion is with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is a past occurrence with abiding results or consequences. Then he goes on to speak of the second part here.

If we suffer we shall also reign with him. Now here is where a step forward or going further into this life that the believer lives.

Here is now the responsibility of the Christian encouraged by a future reward. If we suffer we shall also reign.

[16 : 48] Now what does the word suffer mean? We know for example that there are many people in the world tonight who aren't Christians and who probably have sufferings that you and I know little of.

Many people in deprived areas who know suffering and who live through suffering and who die because of their suffering.

Is that what Paul means here? No. Certainly not. The meaning of the word suffer here is steadfast endurance in the face of difficulty.

Now remember the picture he's given and he's speaking to this man Timothy this young man who's going to take over the reins of the Christian church. He's going to have a very difficult task living in a hostile environment in a world that was trying to destroy the Christians and trying to destroy the gospel.

He's living by faith in Jesus and he must endure steadfastly in the face of all these difficulties. That's what he said.

[18 : 00] You have a responsibility he says now as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to continue in the path that has been mapped out for you.

Continue in the life that must be used as a believer. And when you meet difficulties you must not run away from them but you must face them and endure in them and through them.

Remember how Jesus put it to his disciples speaking to them at the end of his mission in the world ye are they who have continued with me in my afflictions or in my temptations and my sufferings they stood with him they were with him all the time at one stage of his ministry many turned back because they found his teaching too difficult and too hard and said do you want to go back and Peter gave expression to the steadfast endurance of the disciples Lord to whom shall we go thou hast the words of eternal life he was saying that in the face of it all he and they were prepared to

carry on to stay with them to stand their ground to hold on in the midst of trouble and difficulties and afflictions and persecutions and sufferings we are going to carry on that's what it means enduring as

Jesus were right here at night he that endureth to the end the same shall be same so you see what he's saying is this it isn't enough that you believe in Jesus it isn't enough that you claim to have come to a knowledge of Christ five or ten or fifteen or twenty years ago the point at issue is this are you continuing in the faith are you pressing on are you enduring steadfastly as he said earlier as a good Christian soldier are you prepared like a good athlete to grit your teeth and to push on through the pain barrier are you prepared to do that remember he says what the teaching of bible is embodied in the same we must suffer we must endure we must press on we mustn't turn back if we are to reign with him that's what it's saying and you know that this isn't easy

I know that there are many people standing outside the circle of the Christian church many people who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ many people who have never had the courage to walk down that aisle and sit at the Lord's table because they don't have the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that brings them there and yet they might pour scorn on those who have the courage to follow Christ it's not easy in the face of taunts and in the face of opposition and in the face of contempt and ridicule being poured upon you and fingers being pointed at you and elbows being nudged it's not easy in the face of all these things to follow on to endure to persevere unto the end it's not easy to turn the other cheek well he says you remember this if you are to reign with

[21 : 50] Jesus you must be prepared to endure steadfastly as someone has put it the thing in question here is not our union with Christ but the process of steadfast endurance in our life that is our responsibility because endurance always has an end in you deliverance complete salvation at the end and that's the reward we shall reign with him this as someone has put it as an advance on living with him this is what's going to happen this is the reward that awaits all those who share his life here who share the difficulties who show the burdens who carry the cross who deny themselves and in the face of all the difficulties and opposition press on that they may receive the crown this was the path that he took the servant he said is not above his master nor the disciple above his lord if they have persecuted me they will persecute you and if

I had to endure so will you and if the path for me towards the crown is via the cross so it will be with you and for you we shall reign in complete harmony of mind and will with the lord jesus cross there there is no comparison that Paul writes the church at Rome there is no comparison between our sufferings here and the glory to which we are going the glory which will reveal to us and the glory which will reveal in us there is no comparison what we suffer here he says pales into insignificance in contrast with the glory that awaits you remember how you put it again right the church of Corinth and a man who suffered more than any of us probably will ever suffer our light affliction he says was endured but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not to the things we have seen but the things are unseen for the things we are seen are temporal but the things are unseen are eternal and it's perfectly right and perfectly biblical perfectly scriptural for suffering persecuted beleaguered

Christians in this world to long for release to long for deliverance to look for the glory that awaits them perfectly biblical as a matter of fact one would take the mark of grace in the life of the believer that he looks forward to the day when he shall reign with the Lord Jesus Christ when he shall be with him when he shall see him as he is and when he shall have left this valley of struggle and tears and time behind him to enter into the glory above well he says let that encourage you you believe in Christ keep believing keep on keep persevering keep enduring remember he says the reward at the end of the road then thirdly after you live like that he says remember the awful possibility with the fearful consequence for him who denies on the other hand if we deny him he also will deny us and he brings before

Timothy here the possibility of failing to persevere it is possible that some will not persevere and denying Jesus is the exact opposite of enduring unto the end the exact opposite of persevere it is said by one of the commentators and I must say that I found this most interesting that in the New Testament that this word receives its emphasis that that is the word to deny receives its emphasis from the fact that the object whose claim is resisted or denied is supremely oppression if we though the words are in italics here if we deny him he also will deny us we are justified in using that him there that pronoun because denying focuses on our relationship to a person now the classic example of this of course in the

New Testament is Peter when he denied our Lord though the force of denying here is somewhat different you remember that there were three strands to Peter's denial of Christ that week that little young girl who let him in to the high priest's hall said three things to Peter I saw you with him you never did I know you you do not you are one of his I am not and there was a denial focusing on relationship to Jesus Christ it all stemmed from shame Peter didn't want to be identified as he warmed himself by the fire that night he just wanted to be kept out of you know what it's like perhaps when you're in a position in a situation that you ought not to be you know you shouldn't be there and you're afraid that someone's attention will be directed to you and someone asks who are you where are you from what leaves you here

[28 : 47] Peter was mortified when this girl identified so with this feeling of shame embarrassment he said to her you're wrong and he confirmed the point he was making by cursing and by swearing he was afraid to take the consequences of being identified with Jesus Christ so he turned away it was of course in Peter's case a momentary denier he was caught on the hop it was very sudden and in the mercy of God he was soon restored but you see at the heart of it is this principle of denying our Lord abandoning Christ turning away from him if we deny him if we disorcer ourselves from him if we cut ourselves off from him and from all connections with him and our relationship to him if we go off on our own and don't acknowledge him well he will not acknowledge us and we know only too well that this is a possibility within the framework of the

Christian church there have been people who have claimed to believe and people who have persevered and then denied turn their back on the Lord Jesus Christ no one in the Bible says let him that standeth take heed lest he fall no one that Jesus said to his followers remember he says it is he who perseveres unto the end who shall be saved and don't you make any sense of assurance that you may have tonight the ground of your hope for reigning eternally with Jesus assurance or conviction or feelings or thoughts are not the ground of your confidence but the Lord Jesus Christ and if you turn away from him he will turn away from you and as I said there have been countless instances in the word of

God in the history of the Christian church yes and in the word of God of people who ultimately denied our Lord turned their back on him and became spiritual rights spiritual rights and people who were denied ultimately by him we turn our back on him he will turn his back on us that's what he said and someone says to you that's not possible and if you say that my friend well it just shows that you don't know the teachings of Jesus whosoever he said will deny me before men him will I deny before my father in heaven many people he says will say to me in that day open unto us and I will turn to them and say I never knew you depart from me he will turn us back C.H.

Spurgeon lists a number of people who fall into this category people who denied the Lord let me mention one or two of them to you a man who was known as Francis Spira an Italian who was a convert to the Protestant faith and who was the means of bringing others to the faith he was brought to death for his faith by the Inquisition in 1548 but he couldn't stand that trial and fear made him recant and he publicly renounced the Christian and the Protestant faith and the base of that he was released from prison he was spared death and very shortly after it he entered into despair of heart great darkness covered his soul and before he died seemingly his deathbed was was a place that people didn't want to approach because he died with cursing and oathing and swearing the name that he had once espoused he had abandoned the faith he had denied the Lord and he was left in the darkness of despair facing a hopeless death and an endless eternity and that's recorded in history there was once a Puritan zealot in England who was persecuted for his faith he renounced the faith as well and he had a similar death he said I thought I could pray anytime but now I can't heaven is shut to my cry and he gave himself up in despair he died without hope one could multiply these instances recorded for us in scripture someone once put it like this it is better to lose anything than to lose

[35 : 05] Jesus Christ if we deny him he will deny us how do you know as you sit here tonight listen to me and how do I know as I stand here preaching to you what assurance do you have do any of us have that we will continue steadfast unto the end Lord Jesus Christ that's the only way that you can be assured of persevering unto the end and of being assured that you will not deny the

Lord because if you do he will deny you thee that's the king of the word you turn your back on him and he will turn his back on you when it comes to and remember this just doesn't apply to the judgment seat or to eternity it happens in life as well as I've indicated from these two men that I referred that I mentioned it can happen in life that the Lord abandons people to their own sinful

ways and to their own determination to turn their back on him and there have been instances of people and I no doubt they're here as well of people who claim to have faith and who claim to go on tonight perhaps they're in the vanguard of the movement that has trying to destroy the Christian faith perhaps there are people who walk through these doors and who sat as you are sitting here tonight and who listened and perhaps thrilled to the sound of the gospel for all I know tonight may ridicule that very gospel denying it denying him and denying the truth and their lives bear testimony to the fact that the Lord has already denied them what an eternity what a judgment awaits awaits a person like that Timothy says you remember you remember the possibility of denying the Lord don't do it my friend never be ashamed of Christ I know as I indicated earlier that there are circumstances where you may feel terribly embarrassed and where you may perhaps be saying well I hope that this person doesn't ask me anything about the Bible or anything about church or anything about Sunday or what I do or anything

I hope he doesn't and then horror of horror the question is asked do you believe what do you do with your life through the week what do you do with Sunday what do you think of Sunday do you believe the Bible don't tell me you're a believer in Christ I will say this to you never though it may be difficult never deny him if you deny him today it's going to be far easier if I deny him tomorrow difficult though it may be you stand up be prepared to be counted nail your colour to the mast today and you'll be a much stronger Christian if God spurs you tomorrow finally says remember this if we believe not yet he abideth faithfully he cannot deny himself oh the fear of denying him especially when you consider your own frail and your own weakness and you look back over the years and no doubt you're thinking of instances and places at this very moment when you let the Lord down when you didn't do what you ought to have done when you didn't speak when you ought to have spoke and you wish no you had you see my friend there is such a thing as momentary lapses when he's saying of denying him when he speaks he's speaking of that impenitence of spirit that decisive moment of period in a person's life when he assesses all the consequences ways up the pros and the cons of his possible capable of doing it and he says no that's it a deliberate decisive act he turns his back in impenitence upon the Lord Jesus Christ on the other hand there are times when you and I aren't as faithful as we ought to be times like I mentioned right in the history of Peter that great man of

[41 : 01] God when he denied he wasn't faithful which one of us has been as faithful as we ought to have been tonight who is the man or the woman here tonight the boy or the girl who would dare stand up and say Lord I have never failed thee no with shame and confusion of faith we all have to say of course we have failed that is not making an excuse for failure it is not condoning sin or sinful practices not condoning these times in our life when we weren't what we ought to have been or when we didn't do what we ought to have done but this is our encouragement he is faithful he is faithful and though there is no Christian here tonight who could stand in this church and say

I never let him down at the same time there is no Christian who couldn't stand here at night and say this he never let me down he is faithful he cannot deny himself now the time has passed really and I haven't been able to do justice to this so I will leave it at this this is one of the great statements of the Bible concerning the being of God he cannot deny himself you know there are various things that God cannot do God cannot lie God cannot change God cannot sin God cannot die now that's not an evidence of weakness on God's part it only highlights his omnipotence he cannot deny himself in other words he can't change denial is a change of relationship but he can't change he can't and what

Paul surely means is this if God promises to reward those who persevere he will do it if God if God says that he will deny those who deny him he will do it God doesn't change from day to day he is faithful to himself true to his own character he is what he will always be he will never be anything else but what he is and my friend this applies to you and to me tonight you trust and you persevere and depends upon his grace and God will not deny himself and the word that he gave you he will honor it you turn your back on him you bear this in mind God will not change

God will deny you he is faithful to what he has said he is faithful to himself and as you leave this building tonight as I leave and as I knew we step out into the night are you stepping out with him or are you anew turning your back on him is he to be used or is allowed and as someone meets along that street tonight and asks you are you one of his how are you going to answer that question let us pray oh lord do thou bless us have mercy upon our souls and draw near to us in thy grace oh do thou apply the truth with conviction and with meaning and grant oh lord that we would be found

faithful to thee by thy grace we thank thee for thy great faithfulness to us thou art holy thou that dost
inhabit
Israel's praise part of thy blessing and forgive us for Jesus sake amen good you to thank you