

“Remember”

II Timothy 2:8-15

Remember.

Before you speak, Listen.

Before you write, Think.

Before you pray, Forgive.

Before you quit, Try.

Remember. Remember Jesus Christ. Young Timothy, remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Paul is not so much saying to Timothy: “Remember the actual resurrection of Jesus” but rather: “Remember your risen and always present Lord.” Because our memories are not always so great, because we don’t always remember, we feel and are strengthened by Christ’s presence in the sacraments, in prayer, in singing, in coming together as the church – the Body of Christ. When we are called to a task we think we can’t accomplish, or are stricken with an illness difficult to overcome, we go into it certain we do not go alone but with the presence and power of our Risen Lord.

“Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, a descendent of David.” This is the human side of the coin. Remember young Timothy of not only his spiritual presence but that He was born of woman and walked this road, lived this life, faced this struggle, and knows what we’re going through. A descendent of David who knew the desperate struggle of being a man and followed to the bitter end the will of God.

“Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, a descendent of David – that is my

gospel.” That is the good news the world is waiting for. It is the message of liberation from the confines of a hospital room wired to the wall. It is the message of liberation from the physical and emotional abuse of one who doesn’t know how to love. It is the message of liberation from tyrannical bosses, governments, and institutions. This Gospel is the message of liberation from sin and darkness through the victory and light of Easter morning.

Just in verse 8, to remember Jesus Christ is to remember his continual presence, to remember his life on earth, and to remember his victory over sin and death.

Paul is an old man, bound by chains in a Roman prison near the end of his life. He advises young Timothy, “Remember Jesus Christ for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the Word of God is not chained.”

You can imprison the preacher, but you cannot imprison the word he preaches. The message is always greater than the person. Paul had converted enough prisoners and jailers to know the Roman government could never find a prison that could contain the Word of God. So his suffering would not be pointless but would make the road easier for those who came after him.

Paul was willing to suffer for what he believed as were the early Christians fed to wild animals to entertain the wealthy Romans, as was Martin Luther who hid out for a year in the Wartburg Castle fearing for his life, as are present day Christians in the Middle East or the Sudan who are persecuted and even killed for being Christians.

Christians in this country are not suffering for the Gospel when we disagree about how to interpret scripture, or who is welcome or not welcome to the communion table, or whether to

dunk or pour in baptism, or how to worship, or whether or not to put the American flag in the sanctuary, or whether or not to have commercial appliances in the church kitchen, or whether or not to accept homosexual pastors, or whether or not to support the death penalty, or whether or not to support the teaching of evolution in our public schools. Disagreeing with one another is not suffering for the Gospel!

Paul is “literally” suffering for the gospel when he writes in verse 10 that he “will endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Jesus Christ with eternal glory.”

Then in verses 11-13, Paul quotes from the Song of the Martyr, apparently sung by those first century Christians awaiting martyrdom and refusing to recant. . . . ¹¹The saying is sure: 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 will also deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

Verse 11 probably refers to baptism when Paul writes in Romans 6 that “we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

“If we have died with him, we will also live with him.”

On the other hand, in verse 12, “if we deny him, he will also deny us.” In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus says, . . . ³² ‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³ but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

Paul and later Luther taught us that it's a simple message that doesn't take a lot of words. We are saved by God's grace through our faith in Jesus Christ. And yet in verse 14 we read that even 2,000 years ago we were "wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening."

When we lay our head on the pillow and are not too exhausted to recount the day's conversations, were they necessary or unnecessary? Do we measure the value of our words by their impact on others? Paul says we should avoid unnecessary chatter for two reasons. "It does no good and ruins those who listen to it."

St. Ignatius in his book "Spiritual Exercises" asks that question, "As we speak words or hear words from others, do they create connection or disconnection within us, between us, and between us and God?" Ignatius believed the value of our words can be seen by how well they connect us to one another and to God.

I think of today's professional athletes who are known for their trash talking and taunting their opponents. The old school athletes respond with the old but wise cliché, "I let my play do the talking." I've always thought that's a great motto for us in the church. Our actions should speak louder than our words. Christians should always let our play do the talking.

That's why in the last verse of our text, Paul urges us "to do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth."

Keep the gospel simple, know the essentials of what you believe and then let your play,
your living do the talking.

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Remember Jesus Christ. “Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, a descendent of
David – that is your gospel.”

Remember.

Watch your thoughts, for they become words.

Watch your words, for they become actions.

Watch your actions, for they become habits.

Watch your habits, for they become character.

Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

“If we deny him, he also will deny us. If we have died with him, we will also live with
him.”

Remember Jesus Christ and may the peace of God . . .

#454 - Remember and Rejoice