

*The Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost*

October 17, 2010

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

2 Timothy 2:8-13

***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. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. (NIV)***

I'm sure by now most of you have heard about or seen some of the footage of the rescue that took place this week in Chile. For 69 days there were 33 miners trapped under a 700,000 ton block of rock and earth. For one full month the rescue mission worked on digging and digging and digging a hole to reach them and finally one by one they were pulled up. Many are calling the rescue a miracle. Can you even imagine being trapped like that for so long? What did they do? What did they think about? What kept them going? What gave them the strength to persevere? Did they think of their children? Did they recall the love of their mom and dad? Did they dream of holding their spouse in their arms once again? Did they ponder all the good times and memories of life? I would imagine trapped for that long they had plenty of time to reflect and remember things.

Today, the apostle Paul urges us to endure no matter what suffering or hardships come our way. He gives us a proper focus to keep us going. He points us to the Savior as the reason we will be able to persevere. He wants our eyes open to a God who always remains faithful to us. The truth and encouragement from God's Word for our consideration this morning is simply this: **Remember Jesus Christ.**

It seems almost silly to have to tell Christians to remember, or as the original language stresses, keep on or continue to remember Jesus Christ. Isn't it taken for granted that we remember Jesus Christ? Yet, Paul knows what the stress and difficulties of life can do to us. He knows we can get busy and occupy ourselves with all sorts of other things. He knows how we can dwell on the trouble and pain in our lives - the things that our eyes can see. He knows that all too often it is all too easy to forget Jesus Christ.

So Paul pleads "***keep on remembering Jesus Christ!***" To remember Jesus Christ is to remember who Jesus is and what the Christ has done. "***Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.***" Jesus was not just another man who walked on earth in a long line of men. Jesus is the seed of David, the promised Messiah. He is the Savior God promised to Adam and Eve way back in the Garden of Eden. And Jesus accomplished what God said the Christ would. He was raised from the dead. That means our sins are paid for because God accepted Jesus' suffering and death on the cross as the full and complete payment for all sin. Jesus triumphed over the devil and defeated death once and for all. This is the good news, the gospel Paul lived to proclaim. Remembering Jesus' victory over the grave is to remember all that Jesus did to win us the

victory. Remember how Jesus lived and suffered and died and rose for you and me. Remember that we have forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Remember that now we have purpose for living - even when life and serving this gracious God gets tough and challenging.

That's what Paul has been telling Timothy as, in the verses before our text, He writes: "**Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**" Right now, Paul was practicing the very thing he was preaching. "**This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.**" Things are very different for the apostle Paul compared to his last arrest in which he had certain freedoms under basically a house arrest. This time Paul was not treated so favorably. This time Paul could see the writing on the wall. His life was coming to an end. He was locked up in probably something like a dungeon. He is lonely and we get the impression even cold. He longed for friends and to see the light of day. He was chained up like a criminal.

What would keep Paul going? What occupied his mind? What gave him the strength to persevere? Paul endured by remembering Jesus Christ. He endured, confident in this truth: "**But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.**" Can't you almost hear the apostle shouting this truth out? The enemies of Christ's church may have locked him up, but they won't stop the Gospel from being proclaimed. God's Word can't be chained. It will go on to the end of time. There is a saying that: "*God buries His workmen but continues His work.*" Paul is willing to suffer for the Gospel because He knows it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believes. He endures everything for the sake of the believers and for those hearts God's Word is still to work in so they might have salvation and eternal glory found in Christ Jesus.

With these thoughts in mind Paul closes these verses with what may have been a hymn or a poem, or some saying that was familiar to Timothy. He calls it a correct or trustworthy saying: "**If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.**" If we are connected to Jesus through faith we have died with Him and we will live and reign with Jesus. We died with Christ when we were buried with Him in baptism. We live with and for Jesus in the new life He has given to us. We will reign with Christ one day in heaven. Paul knows his suffering for Jesus will be followed by glory. But if we deny and disown Jesus Christ, if we turn away and say the fight is too difficult, the road is too long, our faith is not worth it, Jesus will deny us. As Jesus himself says: "**But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven**" (Matthew 10).

But then this hymn or saying has one more point, doesn't it? That is even if we are faithless, even though we turn away and run away from God and His Word and Will, even though we forsake Him, God remains faithful. His Word again will stand. God is reliable and trustworthy. God cannot lie. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. God never changes. So Paul trusts in God. He endures. He is ready and willing to suffer everything for God's Word and the Gospel. He remembers Jesus Christ.

I don't know about you but I feel a bit ashamed as I think of Paul's example. Are we willing to make such sacrifices for the gospel? Do we have such a Christ-like love for others? Do we endure hardship like a good soldier? I love to sing the hymn *Stand*

*up, Stand up for Jesus*, but too often when it comes time to make a stand for Jesus I fold. How many times don't we remain silent to avoid insult and persecution rather than confess Jesus as Lord? How often do we shrink under pressure from faithfully proclaiming God's Word and truths? We all have gifts and work to do for the Lord and His church and yet how often do we put serving God and His gospel more near the bottom of our priorities than at the top? Do we ever get tired or frustrated doing church work? Are we ever tempted to give up or find ourselves disappointed with the results? Do we ever struggle to endure?

We can learn a lot from Paul about enduring, dear fiends, can we not? For God's Word is not chained! His Gospel is also our gospel - the good news for us and others. Remember Jesus Christ. Turn back to God in repentance and faith and remember how the blood of Jesus purifies you and me from every sin. Remember how Jesus has already won. Look at the empty grave. Remember that no matter how many times we are unfaithful, we have a God and a Savior who is faithful. His forgiving arms are always opened to the repentant sinner. His Gospel never changes. His promises to us remain.

We may never find ourselves buried beneath 700,000 ton of earth for nearly 70 days. But if we did, we would have something to keep us going, a reason to persevere above anything else. Even if we were buried underground, locked up or silenced for good, we have the comforting promise that God's Word is not chained. So whatever hardships we face let us remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ and we will be able to endure all the temptations and trials that come our way. For at the end of our days of suffering there will be a far greater miracle than the one in Chile. Our grave will be an open grave. Did you see the wonderful scene of joy and celebration when some of the miners were pulled up from the ground? When we come out of this dark vale of sin, the celebration and joy will be even greater! We will go from suffering into glory. We will enter into the arms of Jesus and will reign with Christ in heaven. Remember Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has done for you, every day and in every situation. In Jesus, we see just how certain and true it is that our God is a faithful God. May we remain faithful to him, even to the point of death, that we may receive the crown of life. Amen.