



# Central Peninsula Church

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2 Timothy 2:8-13  
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## Remember Jesus Christ

### SERIES: *A Life That Counts: Studies in 2 Timothy*

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Someone once said that confidence is the feeling you have before you fully understand the situation.

A young paratrooper was learning to jump, and he was given the following instructions: First, jump when you are told; second, count to 10 and pull the ripcord; third, in the unlikely event that it doesn't open, pull the second chute open; and fourth, when you get down, a truck will take you back to base.

The plane ascended up to the proper height, the men started peeling out, and the young paratrooper jumped when told. He counted to 10 and pulled the cord, but the chute failed to open. He proceeded to the backup plan. The second chute also failed to open. "Oh boy," he said. "When I get down, I suppose the truck won't be there either."

There's a guy that doesn't fully understand the situation! What about us? What about us as followers of Christ? How can we have confidence and yet still fully understand the situation? There are realities in life that can shatter our confidence - disease, war, personal failure, etc.

Some of you are wondering whether or not confidence is a virtue that followers of Christ should even care to possess. I mean, aren't we supposed to be humble and meek? I like what A.W. Tozer wrote:

"The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather, he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is, in the sight of God, more important than angels. He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring."

I have a theory. I think as followers of Christ, the more we truly understand the situation, the more confident we will be; the more bold and strong and courageous we will be. I'm not talking about an inflated ego. I'm not talking about selfish pride. I'm talking about God-centered and God-honoring confidence. I'm talking about the kind of confidence that leads to moral courage in the face of adversity.

That's what Timothy needed. Timothy was facing some major challenges in his ministry in Ephesus. He needed to be as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson. But how would he get there given the situation? But in 2 Timothy 2:8-13 Paul tells him four things he needed to understand about the real situation.

**"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself"** (2 Tim. 2:8-13).

### The Grounds for Confidence amidst Adversity

**1. The Son of God is risen:** Paul has just finished pointing Timothy to three powerful illustrations of suffering and reward - the dedicated soldier, the disciplined athlete, and the diligent farmer. Now he turns from these metaphors to the concrete example of Jesus Christ. Verse 8 says, **"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendent of David, according to my gospel."**

It's interesting that Paul felt he needed to tell Timothy to remember Jesus Christ. It seems strange that Timothy might forget about Jesus Christ and would have to be told to remember him, but that's what happens. In the midst of adversity we become forgetful, even of Jesus! We remember everything but him.

Throughout the OT God chastened his people for their forgetfulness. That's what Psalm 78 is all about. Psalm 78 is 72 verses lamenting Israel's tendency to forget God's faithfulness. Verses 10, 11 sum it up, **"They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them."** By the way, it was our tendency to forget Jesus Christ that caused him to institute the Lord's Supper, which we will celebrate later this morning. The Lord's Supper was designed as a "forget-me-not."

Notice there are two things we're to remember about Jesus Christ. He's risen from the dead and he's the descendent of David. Why those two things? Believe it or not, these two things say everything there is to say about Jesus.

They say something about his person. They remind us that he was the God - man. He was a man, born of human descendants, from the seed of David. But he was also God - the resurrection being God the Father's bold statement that this was his Divine Son.

They also remind us of his work, specifically his dual role as Savior and King. The phrase "risen from the dead" reminds us that he died for us and was raised to prove that his work as Savior was accepted by God - it was God's "yes" to that sacrifice. The phrase "descendent of David" reminds us of his work as King - he's the heir to David's throne and he came to establish a kingdom.

But I think most of all Paul is pointing not to his nature as the God-man or to his work as the Savior and king, but to his presence with us today. As one who lives with us today, there's no obstacle or enemy that is too great for him to conquer. We don't just have a memory, we have the the power of a presence. There are times in life when we're facing something we know is far greater than we could possibly handle ourselves. But the one who looks to a risen Lord knows he's not alone.

David Livingstone, in the last century, had this confidence, "I go through the jungles of Africa and Jesus is by my side."

Savonarola, that great preacher of the 12th century in Florence, said, "They may kill me, they may tear me in pieces, but never, never, never shall they tear from my heart the living Jesus."

Samuel Rutherford, one of the great Scottish Covenanters, put in jail for his faith, in the 17th century said, "Jesus Christ came into my cell yesterday and every stone shone like a jewel."

Those are men who have confidence because they have learned to "remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead." They faced their problems and battles with an inner impartation of strength, grace, and comfort that they would never have had without his living presence. When fears threaten, when doubts assail, when inadequacy depresses, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, alive and present for you today.

**2. The Word of God is free:** The second ground of confidence is found in the next verse. Paul says for this gospel **"I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned."**

We know that Paul was in prison in Rome. But he uses a word here to describe his situation that is very powerful. The word "criminal" was a technical term for violent people - murderers, thieves, traitors and the like. The only place that word is found in the gospels is to describe the two men that were crucified next to Jesus. Paul says that's how people view me; that's what they are saying about me.

But Paul is not wallowing in self-pity. He's not sitting around moaning about how unfairly he's being treated. You know, God is in charge of our reputation. People say things about us that we know aren't true, but we

don't have to go around and make sure everyone has the facts right. Paul trusted God to bring to light what needed to be brought to light. The key is he knew that the ministry of God's word was not limited by his circumstances or his reputation. He says, "I may be chained up but the word of God is not chained up." Paul was confident because he knew that the ministry of the word of God was bigger than him. He would have agreed fully with the writer of Hebrews who wrote, **"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart"** (Heb. 4:12). It reminds a little bit of the fires we've seen reports of this week in Southern California. How do you stop those things? There is a sense in which they are uncontrollable. The word of God is like that!

Many Christians today are concerned about the direction our nation is headed. And there is good reason for concern. We live in a country where it's okay to teach Jr. High kids how to put a condom on a banana but it's not okay to say "one nation under God" in the pledge of allegiance! That's cause for concern. But do you know what? The word of God is not limited or hindered or restricted by institutionalized atheism. Don't live under the illusion that God's word is dependent on legal guarantees of freedom of religion. Don't believe for one minute that the fight to keep those legal freedoms is a fight to preserve the power of the word of God. We should be grateful for our freedoms and use what means we can to keep them, but you don't have to worry one bit about God's word doing its work.

As many of you know I grew up in a Catholic home whose faith was nominal at best. I never read the Bible. I was raised in public schools where religious instruction was outlawed. When at the age of 17 I began to come under a sense of conviction about my own sin and need for God, I searched through my house to find a Bible, to no avail. I was desperate for the word of God but it was no where to be found. And then I remembered something we had chanted in the Catholic church: **"Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."** That's the word of God. That's John 1:29. That verse brought me, a kid with no Bible, to Christ. The word of God is not restricted by our circumstances.

In the 1930's Stalin ordered a purge of all Bibles and all believers in Russia. In the city of Stavropol that order was carried out with a vengeance and thousands of Bibles were confiscated and multitudes of believers were sent to the Gulags. After the fall of Communism, a group called CoMission sent a team to Stavropol. When they had trouble getting Bibles shipped from Moscow, someone mentioned a warehouse outside of town where confiscated Bibles were stored since Stalin's day. They prayed about it and finally one of the team members mustered up the courage to ask some officials if the Bibles were still there and if they could have them. The answer was yes and yes. They got a truck and some workers to load up the Bibles. One of the workers was a young college student - he was skeptical, agnostic, far from being a Christian. As they were loading up the Bibles, the young man disappeared. When they found him, he was in the corner of the warehouse, weeping. He had slipped away, hoping to steal a Bible for himself. What he found shook him to the core. The

inside page of the Bible he picked up had the handwritten signature of his own grandmother. He had stolen her own personal Bible - a woman persecuted for her faith all her life.

The word of God can no more be contained or chained or held in check than God himself! That's reason for confidence!

But does that mean we can sit around and do nothing? Does that mean that our choices have no relation to the effectiveness of the Word of God?

**3. The purpose of God is good:** There is a connection between Paul's willingness to endure suffering and the salvation and the eternal glory of those who hear the gospel as a result of his ministry. It's not that Paul's suffering saved them the way Christ's suffering saved them, but his suffering allowed them to hear the gospel and receive salvation.

**"For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, and with it eternal glory."**

Notice he calls these people "the chosen" or "the elect." Scripture does teach that believers have been chosen by God in the same way that in the OT the Hebrew people were chosen from among all the nations. Ephesians 1:4-5 says, **"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."** The doctrine of election is not something to gloat over, it's something that humbles us, causes us to be grateful. Jesus said, **"No one comes to me unless it has been granted him from the Father"** (Jn. 6:65). Our salvation is not the result of our good choices; we can't take pride in it because God chose us before we chose him.

But, once again, does this mean that we can just sit back and do nothing to effect the salvation of others? Does this breed fatalism and passivity? Well, not according to Paul. Paul says he preaches and suffers so that the elect of God may "obtain salvation, and with it eternal glory." It's another case of glory through suffering. So the one who wrote, "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world" also wrote, **"How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher"** (Rom. 10:14)?

You see, Paul could be confident while he sat in a Roman prison because he knew that his suffering had an eternal purpose that far outweighed in glory what he had to endure in dishonor and pain. Let me ask you, do you have that confidence? Do you have so much confidence in God's good purpose to save people through the message of Christ that you will do anything short of sinning to win people to Jesus Christ?

Martin Luther has recently come to Hollywood. I haven't seen the movie, but I will, and I'm glad that his story is being told. Unfortunately, whenever I talk about Martin Luther there are still people who think I'm talking about the civil rights movement. But Martin Luther lived about 500 years before the civil rights

movement, and he led a movement called the Reformation. One of the things the Reformation was all about was what we call the priesthood of all believers. The priesthood of all believers means that we're all priests; we all have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. It also means that the ministry of the church is not solely in the hand of the professionals. We're all called to serve Christ. We're all called to bear witness for him. It's not the exclusive domain of a few people who went to seminary and got ordained. Do you have neighbors? Do you have colleagues at work? Do you have students that sit next to you in the classroom? Do you have acquaintances you bump into at the gym or on the soccer field? What if you brought the passion and confidence in the gospel to that relationship? Would you pray for them? Would you find a way to show them that you care? Would you look for an opportunity to talk to them about Christ? Would you do anything short of sinning to win them to Christ?

**4. The promise of God is sure:** There is a final ground of confidence that we see in vv. 11-13, **"It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself."**

Most scholars believe that this "trustworthy statement" is some sort of ancient poem or hymn that was sung in the early church. You can see without looking too hard that there is a poetic quality to these lines. There are four stanzas or lines, each begins with an "if" that describes our actions and is followed by a result in terms of Christ's response. The first two lines deal with the positive actions; the last two deal with negative actions. All of the lines deal with our commitment to and our confession of Christ.

"If we died with him, we shall also live with him." This is talking about our conversion. When we come to Christ we die. Paul says in Romans 6 all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death. It says we have been buried with him and raised with him and now we are alive in him. To "live with him" has to do with the present. Eternal life has already started.

The second stanza moves from converting to continuing. "If we endure, we shall also reign with him." This is Paul's main concern for Timothy. "Timothy, you must endure hardship. You must join with me in suffering. Don't bail out. Don't take the easy road. Because if you endure now you will reign later." Remember, he is a King; he reigns. The day will come when we will reign with him. In I Cor. 6:2-3 Paul says one day we will judge the world; we will judge angels. We will not be THE judge or THE King but we will be like vice regents who assist him in his reign.

Next we move to the negative at the end of v. 12. This is dealing with denying or literally disowning Christ. This is not just talking about a temporary lapse of faith, like Peter had when he denied Christ. This is talking about a kind of settled rejection of your profession of faith. This is what

Jesus was talking about when he said, **“But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven”** (Mt. 10:33). This is an ominous statement. The stakes for following Christ and enduring to the end are high. That was true for Timothy and it’s true for us. Guys like the ones Paul mentioned in 1:15 are in a heap of trouble.

Finally, the last line comes as a surprise. “If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.” We would expect him to say, “If we are faithless towards him, he will be faithless towards us.” There are some who take this that way. They say that Paul is declaring that God will be faithful to his warnings; he will carry out his threats. But I believe this is a promise, and not a warning. If we lapse into unfaithfulness, he remains faithful to us, just as Jesus did with Peter. Why? Because **“he cannot deny himself.”** There is something God cannot do. He cannot act in a way that is contrary to his nature. The one who chose us from before the foundation of the world will see us through to the end.

Samuel Rutherford, who spent years in a Scottish prison, wrote, “Often and often, I have in my folly torn up my copy of God’s covenant with me; but, blessed be his name, he keeps it in heaven safe; and he stands by it always.”

That’s our confidence. Our confidence is not in ourselves; it’s in the faithfulness of God to his promises.

## CONCLUSION

Confidence is not the feeling you have BEFORE you really understand the situation. Rather it’s the feeling you have WHEN you fully understand the situation. The situation is this: Despite whatever you are facing, the Son of God is risen, the Word of God is free, the purpose of God is good, and the promise of God is sure.

You can be confident when you face challenges and threats that are bigger than you are because Jesus has conquered all of it and he is with you.

You can be confident when your circumstances keep you from having the kind of influence you want to have because the Word of God is not bound or limited by your circumstances.

You can be so confident in the saving purpose of the gospel that you will do anything short of sinning to win people to Christ.

You can be so confident in the faithfulness of God that even your own lack of faith won’t thwart God’s good purpose in your life.

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