

"Remembering Jesus"

2 Timothy 2:8-10

October 13, 2013

21st Sunday After Pentecost

When I was a child going to school, my mother always warned me about getting into trouble - getting lost, having a stranger approach me, and so on. She would say, "Always remember your address. Always remember your phone number. And always remember that a policeman is your friend." And I remembered those things. I don't know if I ever had to use that information, but I remembered it all the same. Maybe your mother told you the same thing. Maybe you parents tell your children similar things today. If we get into trouble, it is always important to remember how we can get help.

Many of us are "grown-ups" now. Our mothers don't warn us any more. Yet we still have troubles. Often, it seems, our problems today are far bigger problems than those that faced us as children. Do we still remember how to get help and where to get help? Or do we spend our time fretting and worrying over problems and potential problems? Do we remember the Word of God saying, "[Cast] all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you." Do we even believe that? When our life is good and everything is fine, we do believe it. But when troubles pop up, do we ever remember these and other promises from God's Word? Sometimes the answer is no.

When you get sick or have physical problems, what do you remember to do first - pray to God or run off to the doctor? Most of us remember the doctor first. We may not even remember the praying part. This might work out all right unless the doctor can't help us. We remain in our suffering. The disease is not cured. Perhaps death approaches. All we can remember is how bad the situation is.

The same is true with financial problems. Do we remember to trust in the Lord for our "daily bread" or do we complain about our financial woes? There is always, it seems, a lot of complaining about money problems. This has been compounded by fear and frustration over the present situation

in Washington, D.C. When we have financial problems, it is easy to worry, "How will I earn enough to pay those bills? Will we have enough for the future?" When our financial situation is bad, we tend to forget God's promise to care for us and depend on ourselves.

Many people are having family problems today. When a husband and wife have marital problems, what do they do? Remember God's promise of help in our difficulties and run to the pastor for that help? No. Many remember only their individual wants and needs while running to a lawyer for a divorce.

The list of troubles which we face in life goes on and on. We can easily forget God because of those troubles. However, troubles can help us remember God, too. Our epistle lesson for today shows that. Paul wrote our text from Rome. He was sitting in prison - a dark, damp cell. Do you know why he was in prison? Did he steal or murder? No. Paul was in prison because he preached about Jesus Christ. That was forbidden by law to do so at the time. The punishment for preaching Jesus Christ was death by beheading. Paul was close to death while he wrote this and he knew what was about to happen. So he writes one final letter to a young man named Timothy. Timothy was a pastor himself, trained by Paul and Paul was giving him some final advice.

Notice what Paul writes. Paul has a reason to feel depressed: He's sitting in jail all alone. Yet Paul does not write depressing words. Paul has a reason to complain: He has done nothing wrong, yet he is still in jail. But Paul does not write to complain. Paul has a reason to be frustrated and give up: He is about to die. Yet Paul does not write to advise Timothy to give up. Paul has one thing to say to Timothy: Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

Why is this so important to remember? All of our problems, troubles, fears, sadnesses, depressions, and frustrations are a result of sin in our world. Sin has corrupted the creation which God had declared as being "very good." Therefore, all of the circumstances in this world which give us grief are a result of sin.

Sin also separates. Sin not only causes us to be separated from our God, but it also causes us to be separated from fellow human beings. This is why we fail to remember God's love and His

promises of help, comfort, and care. Our sin blocks those things out from our hearts and minds. We think only of ourselves and see all of our problems from a sin-corrupted perspective. From that perspective, things look pretty bleak. You fight and you claw your way through trouble after trouble, problem after problem, and disappointment after disappointment. And, having gotten through all of those things, you end up at death's doorstep for the ultimate problem along with everyone else.

Paul was not naïve about the way of the world. Paul was suffering because sinners were persecuting him. He would die, ultimately because he was a sinner. But he knew that Jesus came into the world to take on sin and death. On the cross, Jesus accepted the punishment for Paul's sin, our sin, and the sin of all mankind in order to defeat sin and its consequences: every problem and trouble we could ever possibly experience, up to and including death here on earth and death forever in hell.

But Jesus did even more than that. He physically rose from the grave and came back to life again. This is more than a happy ending to a sad story or a postscript to His work on the cross. Jesus' resurrection was the proof and guarantee that Jesus had triumphed. He had defeated sin and paid for sins' consequences. Paul rejoiced because his sins were forgiven. He had a right relationship with God.

Jesus' rising from the dead gave Paul courage to face his problems. Jesus did not just rise from the dead. Jesus rose from the dead and continues to live. Jesus promises to be with His followers always. He promises to be with His followers during the good times which we all easily recognize. But Jesus also promises to be with His followers during the bad times -- during the bitterest suffering, the deepest depressions, and the worst problems. Jesus was with Paul in that jail cell and Paul knew that. Therefore, he was brave and feared nothing.

Jesus' rising from the dead also calmed all of Paul's fears. Jesus rose from the dead so that His people could rise from the dead, too. If Jesus died and remained dead, we would have no hope. He might be a good teacher, a powerful healer, a mighty miracle worker, and a nice man, but, being dead, He would be a worthless Savior. Paul had written to the Corinthians, "And if Christ has not

been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

But Jesus had risen from the dead and that changes everything. He continues in his letter to the Corinthians, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep...For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." All who are in Adam – that is, are born in this earth – are doomed to die, temporally and eternally. All who are in Christ by faith are guaranteed to live. Christ has triumphed. Sin and its consequences in this life and the next have lost. His people will triumph, too. Therefore, Paul did not fear death. Paul knew that he would live again in heaven forever. And that was most important to him – more important even than his current circumstances. So Paul writes in our text, "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."

Paul is saying to Timothy, "Don't let your problems defeat you. Don't worry or be afraid no matter what happens to you. Remember Jesus Christ." That message is for us, as well. All of our problems in our lives are a result of sin, too. We don't live in a perfect world. And, when we fail to trust in God, that is sin, as well. But I tell you, as Paul told Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead." Jesus Christ died for your sins. He has accepted your punishment and removed all of your sin and its consequences. He rose from the dead to guarantee that. In the midst of anything and everything that seems to be going wrong, you are right with God.

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead." He rose from the dead for you, too. He continues to live for you and with you and in you, too. Don't worry. Don't fear your problems or become depressed, despondent, or frustrated. You are not alone. Jesus Christ is with you now, just as He was with Paul in that jail cell. Jesus gave Paul strength to endure his awful problems. Jesus dwells within you and gives you strength to endure your problems now. All of your problems will not magically disappear. Many problems will stay. Some will be very serious as earthly problems are measured. But Jesus will stay, too, and give you His power through His Word of promise which you heard read and preached to you regularly. He feeds you with His body and blood to forgive your sins

and to encourage you along the way of this life. He gives you to eat and drink by encouraging you to “do this in remembrance of Me”, remembrance of all He has done for you. You can be confident as you live your life every day, no matter what happens, with Jesus and in His strength and mercy.

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead." He rose from the dead and you will, too. He will not forget you nor abandon you at the moment of death. As that familiar Psalm states it, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me;" Nothing can defeat you, not even death. No matter what happens to you, God will not abandon you. Even when you die, Jesus Christ will make you alive and allow you to live forever in heaven where you will be free, once and for all, of all problems and difficulties.

If you are like me, there are many things happening in your life. It is easy to forget things. Sometimes, I have to write things down to help me remember or my mind will go blank. When you are facing problems and difficulties in your life, don't let your mind go blank. Remember Jesus Christ. He loved you and died for you. He rose from the dead and lives for you. He is with you now and will stay with you forever and ever. Remember that. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead!
Amen.