

10-9-22

Sermon- Battles Over Words

Scripture- 2 Tim 2:8-15, CTW PS 66: 1-12

Hymns- 107, 580, 560

Theme- Paul says that useless arguments and battles over words are threatening to tear the church apart. Has anyone seen that happening? If so, what should we do about it?

I. Paul Is Telling Timothy And Us To Unchain the Gospel!

A. This letter by Paul to Timothy along with his letter to the Philippians were probably the last two letters he ever wrote. We find Paul chained in prison. As a Roman citizen before his condemnation to death, he had been given some liberty to receive friends and visitors.

Now the only one left would have been **Luke** who might have made himself Paul's slave so that he could conduct business for him in prison and gather information from Paul so he could write HIS account of the Gospel.

As a slave, Luke would have liberty to go in and out. He could bring in food and drink. As a physician, he could care for Paul's broken body.

We know Paul has been condemned because now he is chained. Death row in Rome was a very short stay unlike America, so Paul knew his time was very short at this point. He probably sent these last letters out through Luke either in oral form in which Luke remembered and wrote down, or if he had paper, written.

The Second letter to Timothy is particularly touching and shows Paul's great affection and pride in his adopted son. Timothy and others would have to carry on the torch of the gospel. Paul's race was coming to its end, and now he was awaiting his transport to eternal glory in Christ's kingdom.

B. Besides some touching reminiscences of their time together along with Timothy's mother and grandmother, Paul also needed to give final instructions to Timothy.

Timothy was a man of some ability, but he tended to be timid.

The future Timothy would face required great boldness in the faith. Paul could shield Timothy somewhat while he was alive, but now he would be on his own, although he would not be totally alone because the Holy Spirit would be with Timothy.

Recently in Discipling Class we were all reminded that we must approach that job KNOWING that we have the power of the Holy Spirit inside of us, always with us to guide us and keep us focused on our mission.

Paul reminds Timothy that hands had been laid on him. He was **set aside for Christ's service.** He had been prepared for it by his mother and grandmother at first and then disciplined by Paul himself.

II. In this part of the letter, Paul begins by reminding Timothy that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, a core belief of the Christian faith.

A. There is no Christianity without the resurrection. By telling Timothy this, he reminds **him** as well as **himself** that even though the executioner's axe would soon sever his head, that this is just the beginning of the story and **not the end.**

The same God who raised Jesus from the dead would raise Paul also. And not only Paul, but Timothy as well. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain for the Gospel.

Paul realizes there are chains that restrain his aging body, but it is his earnest desire that in spite of this, **the Gospel must not be chained.**

Paul's desire is that his chains themselves might preach his final sermon. He tells Timothy he suffers these chains as if he were the chief of sinners.

But he was not in this Roman condemnation for the sins he committed in his youth. The Christians he persecuted were not the reason he stood condemned before this court. And he would stand **uncondemned** by the one who called him into ministry only because of God's wonderful grace.

But the one who called him reminded Paul that he would suffer great things for the Gospel. Here Paul passes that warning on to Timothy and as disciples, he passes the warning on to us.

He had endured all kinds of toils and snares for those who would believe the Gospel through his preaching. Now there was only more thing for him to endure in this life.

B. Paul here characterizes the Gospel that is to be unchained through one of his "faithful sayings" as he had also impressed upon Timothy the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The beginning of this saying reinforces the resurrection. **Because Christ arose, we will also arise.**

Also, Timothy needed to get used to suffering. And when he would suffer, he needed to be reminded that he would also one day reign with Jesus, because he persevered!

We also see this in the **12th chapter of Hebrews** about Jesus looking beyond the pain and shame of the cross and seeing the joy at the other end of His suffering.

Jesus is risen and sits at God's right hand. He shall reign for ever and ever, and we with Him. But we must remain faithful to carry our crosses, daily, willing to die the same death for the same cause.

C. Paul warns Timothy to be steadfast in the difficulties he would face. He must not deny Jesus. To be apostate in the faith means to be denied before the Father.

It is a terrible thing to consider these words being said: “Depart from me; I never knew you!” The final determiner of relevance shall occur before the judgment seat of Christ!

One can be irrelevant to this world, but that doesn't matter in the long run.

But if one should fail to believe, this in no way changes the reality of who Christ is.

When pressed, Jesus affirmed who He was, before both the Sanhedrin and then, Pontius Pilate. **He could not deny Himself.**

D. Although Paul does not describe all the other details of the Gospel here, he does emphasize the cost of discipleship the Gospel demands. There has been much talk over the centuries of the badge of election. **How does one know they are elect?**

Disciples have to be a little careful not to fall into over-confidence or substitute human evaluations for that of Christ.

But there are two things which stand out. It isn't a matter of being liked or respected in this world. It isn't good works that follow salvation that serves as a reliable barometer.

Some can do good works after salvation even though they have left their first love, but if one suffers for the sake of the Gospel and not their own foolishness, it demonstrates true Christian character.

The other badge is joy, even in that suffering. Joy is to be found in the world in joyful situations, but Christian joy is real in that it is able to be expressed even in suffering.

You can see this of Paul in the **Epistle to the Philippians**, another of my favorites. In many ways, Philippians is the most joyful of Paul's writings, even though he was in chains awaiting execution.

We can also see an example of this in Acts where Peter and John who had been threatened with death and suffered a painful beating **counted it joy that they were found worth to suffer for the name. THINK OF THAT!**

III. Paul goes on to remind Timothy and Us of what the Gospel is not.

A. The Gospel is not about disputes and philosophical or theological wranglings. It is not about advancing one's pet theories which cause division and strife. There can be no substitutes to the Gospel.

How often are the powerful words of the Gospel chained by the ideas of men!

Instead, Paul simply tells Timothy to be diligent in his work. In this context, Paul is talking about the study of Scripture, the basis of the Gospel.

Disciples of Christ are to be diligent in faithfully proclaiming the Word of the Gospel. It is in this that Timothy will find God's approval of his ministry. He would be known as one who rightly divides the Word of Truth. No greater honor is to be sought than this.

Paul says that a disciple has to remain faithful even when the doubters of this world desert you or even betray you.

B. Timothy is also called to be diligent to find those whom he can disciple as well, ones who would be able to disciple others. Someday, Timothy would face his last breath, and as tradition holds, martyrdom. Timothy needed to prepare

the next generation of Timothy's to continue to proclaim the unchained Gospel, the one which unchains sinners.

Timothy was to oppose the naysayers everywhere with the truth of the Gospel. These stand as examples of those whose teachings chained people rather than free people.

Many years earlier, Paul wrote to the **Galatians** to warn against those who tried to put the chains of Judaism upon the believers. Paul told the Galatians that their "Gospel" was not a Gospel at all. The true Gospel cannot be chained even when its proclaimers are chained, not by God, but by those who oppose the Good News.

C. So what are we to make of these words today? At least here in America, there is not anyone that I know of who is in chains for the Gospel. There are many of our brethren in this world who are, and we should pray diligently for them. We do pray that if it be God's will that they might be released.

But Paul would remind us that we must all the more pray that in their chains and suffering that they remain true to the Gospel.

We know that there is great temptation to deny Christ. In some places, if the chained Christian would deny Christ and proclaim some other god, they might find more popularity and freedom.

But according to Paul, One will either hear the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, Enter into the joy of the Lord!" Or they will hear as we noted before: "Depart from Me!"

We must preach the unchained Gospel! As Paul notes: "Preach it whether it is convenient or not. Preach it even if it leads to chains." There are far too many who preach another Gospel. There are too many who water down the message.

Only the true Gospel has the power to liberate people from the of sins. Amen? Let Us Pray...