

# Why the Gospel is a Faithful Saying

## Part 1 of 2

### (II Timothy 2:8-12a)

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

## I. Introduction:

God, through the writing of the Apostle Paul, refers to His Gospel as ða faithful saying.ö Today I would like for us all to consider the scriptural answer to this question, ðWhy is the Gospel a Faithful Saying?ö Put another way, ðWhy is the gospel (the good news of how God saves sinners) a truth in which sinners can place their full confidence?ö How can we know that the Gospel of God's grace is totally trustworthy ó a ðfaithful saying,ö that can be relied upon and is therefore, worthy to be believed? Well, Paul, under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit in writing to his younger understudy, young Timothy, answers this question in 2 Timothy, chapter 2. And his answer is such that it should cause all men and women who hear these words to reject any and all of the false ways (false gospels) by which we naturally imagine we could be saved and instead embrace the one, sure and certain way set forth in God's word ó His Gospel of sovereign grace ó for it alone is the ðfaithful sayingö

So turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy, chapter 2. Today I'll be delivering Part 1 of a 2 part series I've titled ðWhy the Gospel is a Faithful Saying.ö The answer to this question is provided for us in verses 11-13; however, to capture the broader context and so as to be sure we are clear about the content of this faithful saying, (God's gospel), we will begin our examination of this text in verse 8 of 2 Timothy 2.

## II. II Timothy 2:8-10 with commentary: Paul is continuing to instruct Timothy as to the ministry of the gospel and picking up in verse 8, we read:

A. Verse 8: ***“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:”*** Now Timothy already knew the gospel and as such, this one short sentence would speak volumes to Timothy, bringing to his remembrance all the vital issues of the gospel. Here, in referring to the ðseed of David,ö Paul is reminding Timothy of Christ's humanity, death, and resurrection. Hereby he is noting the necessity of the humanity of Christ ó how He had to become incarnate and walk on this earth as the God-man in order to save His people from their sins.

According to God's gospel (which Paul, having embraced, calls his gospel) Christ had to be made like unto us in every way (except without sin) in order to accomplish salvation as a Substitute and Representative of sinners such as you and me. As Paul wrote to the Galatians in Gal. 4:4-5: ***“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, <sup>5</sup>To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”***

And as Paul preached on Mars Hill in Acts 17, it is by the resurrection that assurance is given unto all men that Christ got the job done ó that full satisfaction to God's justice was made by His obedience unto death. For the very merit of His work, that satisfaction (called in the scripture the righteousness of God), demanded that He live ó be raised from the dead. As the verse on the front of your bulletin (Rom. 5:21) points out, just as sin demands death, righteousness ó the satisfaction to God's justice made by Christ both in precept (His sinless, perfect obedience of God's revealed will) and by penalty (the infinitely valuable payment of His shed blood due unto all the sins of those He represented) ó this righteousness demands life. It demanded His resurrection as well as all those He represented ó all those for whom He lived and died. So by these words Paul is reminding Timothy of this vital truth.

B. Verse 9: And as the thought continues in verse 9, he is speaking of the gospel when he says, ***“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.”*** Paul wrote this letter to Timothy while in prison in Rome. And he was imprisoned in persecution over the gospel he proclaimed. But he adds that though he might be in bonds, that *“the word of God is not bound.”* The *“word of God”* here is not referring to all truth as recorded in the Bible ó but rather to the specific word of the gospel for which he was being persecuted ó the good news of the Gospel that sets forth God's way of salvation by Christ alone. It's noteworthy that men may be bound for the sake of the word, but almighty God overcomes any and all obstacles to insure His word reaches the objects of His everlasting love ó each and everyone for whom Christ lived and died.

As Christ said in John 10:27-30: ***“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: <sup>28</sup>And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup>I and my Father are one.”*** The word of God is not bound. It will reach the sheep. So, Paul has told Timothy that he suffers trouble over the gospel, but knowing that this very specific *“word of God,”* the gospel, shall reach its intended audience, Paul says in verse 10í

C. Verse 10: “**Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**” You see, it is for the elect, the sheep, those chosen from everlasting by God the Father unto salvation which is in Christ Jesus alone, that causes Paul to endure or persevere in his suffering for he knows that the word of God is not bound ó that all those for whom the Lord Jesus Christ lived and died shall without fail hear and believe the gospel.

Paul writes that he perseveres in the gospel ministry, that they may also òobtainö the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Salvation is in Christ Jesus and the elect shall òobtainö it. The Greek word translated òobtainö there is a word that means that it shall ñlight upon themø or ñmeet with themø or ñaffectø them. In other words, as with Paul, each of them without fail shall be enlightened to the salvation which is exclusively in and by the Person and work of Christ as they are given spiritual life and all the accompanying spiritual faculties ó the very life Christ purchased for each and every one of them for whom He lived and died.

Consider in John chapter 6 where in verse 37 Christ says, “**All that the Father giveth me <the elect> shall come to me;**” <they shall obtain salvation ó it shall light upon them in each successive generation>. And then down in vs. 39 He continues saying, “**And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.** <sup>40</sup> **And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.**” So then, who are these, the òeveryone which seeth the Son and believeth on himö ó whom Christ will raise up at the last day? They are the òall which he <God, the Father > hath given <Him, God the Son>ö ó the election of grace to whom Paul preaches.

Think of that. While we desire the salvation of all and preach indiscriminately to all who will listen, the Bible is clear that the gospel is only effectual, will only be heard and believed from the heart by those given a new heart ó spiritual life and the accompanying God-given gift of faith and repentance. We don’t know in advance who they, (the elect for whom Christ lived and died), are. But we do know that (1) the true gospel will only be believed by them and (2) that not one of them shall fail to hear and ultimately believe it. They shall obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

III. Verses 11-12a: That brings us to the verses I’d like for us to take particular notice of this morning, beginning in verse 11 where we read: “**It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: <sup>12</sup>If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:...**”

- A. Here Paul asserts that *ōitō* is a faithful saying. Now the *ōitō* he is referring to is the specific Gospel message of how God saves sinners. It is the true gospel that is distinguished from any other in that therein (in the gospel message itself) is the righteousness of God revealed (Rom. 1:16-17). That is, His righteousness ó the perfect satisfaction to God's law and justice that Christ alone rendered in His obedience unto death on the cross ó is revealed in this faithful saying.
- B. This expression, *ōIt is a faithful sayingö* is used by Paul and recorded in the scripture a total of 4 times. In each case, it is referring to the specific gospel message. The Greek word for *ōsayingö* is the word *ōlogos.ö* It is the same word used in verse 9 in referring to the *ōword of Godö* which from the context we have seen is the specific gospel message (called by Paul *ōmy gospelö*) back in verse 8. Perhaps the most well known usage of this phrase is found in I Timothy 1:15 where Paul wrote to Timothy, ***“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”*** There, Paul is describing the gospel in one of its simplest forms as He tells us that the *ōfaithful saying,ö* worthy to be accepted by all, is simply this: ***“Christ Jesus came into the world <He was the seed of David> to save sinners;...”***
- C. In contrast, notice that in using this phrase in 2 Timothy 2, Paul does more than simply describe what the faithful saying is. Here, after stating that it, the gospel, is faithful (worthy of your faith), he describes for us why it is so trustworthy ó why it is a faithful saying ó as he continues with the words ***“..for if...”*** And from this point through verse 13, he tells us why it is a faithful saying. And herein we see that it is indeed good news for sinners who are brought to see their desperate need for the union with Christ that he proceeds to describe.
- D. Union with Christ:

Now in verse 11 and the first part of 12, Paul begins this description as to why the gospel is a faithful saying. And as I hope you'll see, he describes why salvation is sure and certain for God's elect ó for all of those given to Christ as their Surety, their Representative, their Substitute so that in the eyes of God's law and justice they are one with Him. And our understanding of this union or oneness with Christ is essential to our understanding of why God's gospel is indeed a faithful saying. The gospel of grace sets forth how God saves sinners, not based upon any contributing conditions or requirements met by those sinners, but rather based solely upon the Person and finished work of their Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This message is worthy to be believed and relied upon because He, the God-man, cannot and did not fail to save His sheep. Well how do you know if you are among them? Must you have this, His way of salvation as evidenced by your having repented from ever imagining that something you did (some decision, act of faith, etc.) could accomplish that which the scripture declares could only be accomplished (and was fully accomplished) by the shed blood, the righteousness of the God-man? As we just learned from John 6, only those and all those whom God the Father gave to God the Son shall come unto Him. He shall save His people and His people are those who are providentially brought to hear and believe from the heart His gospel. It is that simple.

If God hasn't already done so, pray He will grant you spiritual life to see your desperate need for Christ and His imputed righteousness or the merit of what He accomplished credited to the account of His sheep just as the sins of His sheep were imputed or charged to His account that He might pay the penalty due unto them (2 Cor. 5:21). Now as we consider today verse 11 and the first part of verse 12, I want you to notice what I believe are 2 facets to the believer's union in Christ or 2 facets that are always found together in the life of one blessed with God-given faith.

1. Union or oneness of the believer with Christ as their Representative and Substitute before God's justice in His obedience unto death on the cross.
2. Union or oneness of the believer with Christ in the believer's walk of faith in this life. And there is no walk of true God-given faith except for those for whom that faith was purchased or those for whom Christ represented and substituted Himself, dying to pay the debt due unto their sins on the cross.

E. Consider now the beginning of the explanation as to why the gospel is a faithful saying. Paul begins saying, "*...if we be dead with him, we shall also live with Him.*"

1. What good news. As John 6 has taught us, all those given to Christ by the Father in the everlasting covenant of grace, those for whom He lived and died, He shall raise them up at the last day. They shall live eternally with Him! Christ did not die for Himself. The scripture says He knew no sin, that He offered Himself as a sacrifice without spot. He died for His sheep, bearing away their sins and by this perfect satisfaction to God's justice, He merited for them everlasting life. Now that is a faithful saying that cannot fail. It is as sure as His own resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father.
2. Also, I believe that Paul here is alluding to the newness of life in which he and, ultimately, all other elect sinners who were one with Christ in His death on the cross come to experience in their respective lifetimes.

To see ourselves dead in Christ is to be freed from sin, knowing that the penalty due unto our sin has been extracted. We are freed from the power and dominion of sin to curse us and so we now walk by faith, living with Him ó having been made spiritually alive by God's Spirit under the preaching of the gospel whereby He draws us to look to Christ and Him alone for all of our righteousness before God. When God (in each successive generation) is pleased to show His sheep that their only hope for salvation is in Christ alone, based upon His imputed righteousness alone, then they no longer look within for their salvation, as if trying to produce a righteousness of their own.

3. Be turning with me to Romans 6. Now the reason I am confident that Paul has in mind our union in Christ both (1) as our Representative before God's justice in His finished work on the cross and (2) our oneness with Him as one spiritually alive unto God in our walk of faith is because of Paul's linkage of these things in Romans 6. Look at this passage with me beginning in Romans 6:3: ***“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”*** <That word “baptized” signifies the oneness or union of Christ with the election of grace ó being “baptized” or placed into his death.> ***<sup>4</sup>Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*** ***<sup>5</sup>For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*** <Be made like Him in glory> ***<sup>6</sup>Knowing this, that our old man*** <the “old man” speaking of our standing with fallen humanity in Adam> ***is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, <rendered powerless> that henceforth we should not serve sin.*** ***<sup>7</sup>For he that is dead is freed from sin.*** ***<sup>8</sup>Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*** <even now in our experience as well as throughout eternity> ***<sup>9</sup>Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*** ***<sup>10</sup>For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*** ***<sup>11</sup>Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*** ***<sup>12</sup>Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*** ***<sup>13</sup>Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead,*** <i.e. ó not in order to be accepted by God by attempting to produce a righteousness of your own but because you already are righteous, holy, unblameable, unproveable in Christ, having His righteousness imputed, as the scripture says, “accepted in the beloved.” So, yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, í > ***and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.***

4. Do you see the unbreakable link cited here by God's word: **"...if we be dead with him, we shall also live with Him."** Christ as Surety took on the responsibility for the salvation of the elect and so from everlasting was united to them in that sense. And it can be said of each and every one of them, that they died with Him. And as sure as He arose from the grave, they then by necessity of the justice of God shall live with Him. And who are these? ó all who come to Him by God given faith, in belief of the Gospel ó in sole reliance on this trustworthy, faithful way of salvation.

F. ("**If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:...**") And God continues through Paul describing this oneness with Christ at the beginning of verse 12 when he writes, **"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:..."**. Again, see the unbreakable link. Likewise, it can be said of each and every one of God's sheep that they suffered with Him. I believe that the sentence structure here, citing those who are dead with him implies that these who suffer also suffer with him ó that is, with Christ and for His sake. And as sure as He ascended to the throne at the right hand of the Father in heaven by having established the righteousness by which grace reigns, they then shall undeniably reign with him. Remember, the righteousness He wrought out in His life and death was for His sheep. And they thereby benefit. They shall reign victorious over sin and Satan, all based upon the merit of His righteousness.

I think it is clear from other passages that this also speaks (1) of our union with Christ, our Representative, in His suffering on the cross as well as (2) in our identification with Him in the walk of faith as all believers, to some degree (like the apostle Paul here) suffer in part over our identification with the gospel message which the scripture describes as foolishness to those whom God has not enlightened.

1. First, God's elect suffer with Christ as He suffered as their Representative on the cross. As the Prophet Isaiah foretold of His suffering and death in Isaiah 53, he said, **"... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."** We suffered with Him as He represented us and thereby, (and on that basis alone), we reign with him as victorious over sin and Satan in a spiritual, eternal kingdom ó a reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).
2. Turn now with me to Romans 8. Secondly, we see the application of this union in the walk of faith as it is applied to the suffering that each of God's elect experience to some degree as ambassadors for Christ. In Romans 8, beginning with verse 16 Paul wrote:

*“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: <sup>17</sup>And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, <I think this is referring to those for whom He suffered as a Representative and Substitute on the cross> that we may be also glorified together. <sup>18</sup>For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time <linking now our temporal sufferings for the sake of the gospel that all believers experience> **are not worthy to be compared with the glory** <speaking of our final glorification with Christ, earned by His finished work on the cross> **which shall be revealed in us.**”*

3. In Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, in the group of verses often referred to as the Beatitudes, Christ cites evidences found among all those for whom He would die and who would have already, in time, received the fruit and effect of His death (spiritual life and God-given faith and repentance) ó those who had already been translated into His kingdom, this reign of grace. He describes them as õblessedö ó meaning eternally blessed. Near the end of that section, Christ says in Matt. 5, beginning in verse 10, *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*
4. So, we see that all who suffered with Christ, their Representative, in His suffering on the cross shall also suffer for His sake in their walk of faith. There are various ways in which we might suffer or undergo some degree of hardship as we persevere in the faith. But to cite just one example, consider that even to the extent you identify with this church and its beliefs, you too know, at least in a small, but unmistakable way, what it is to have someone õsay all manner of evil against you falselyö for the very reason identified here in the scripture ó for Christ’s sake, for righteousness’s sake.
5. Now if you don’t identify with God’s Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed, then you will not suffer or be persecuted for righteousness’s sake. People (particularly religious people who have not submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ that is revealed in God’s gospel of grace) naturally will take offence at the proclamation of God’s Gospel and its insistence that it is by His imputed righteousness and that alone that sinners are justified. The Bible refers to this as õthe offence of the crossö and as a result, those who identify with the gospel must endure or suffer to some degree. People hear the gospel you proclaim (or at least identify with) and it runs counter to their natural religious persuasions. And if they hear what you’re saying and if it exposes and contradicts where their hope lies, they typically harbor some ill will toward you on account of that.



6. Certainly there are other more severe ways in which believers may suffer persecution. As you know, many in the early church were killed in persecution over the gospel. But in considering the offence of the cross to the natural mind, you can see how all who identify with God's gospel can be said to endure some degree of suffering or persecution. The mild suffering endured by most believers in our day (and even the most severe persecution one could endure in this life), is inconsequential when we consider the suffering of our Savior whereby we are eternally blessed.
7. You know, if we were content with simply acting justly towards others, being kind and loving, and charitable, but not insisting upon salvation by Christ alone, then we might go through the world, not only with peace, but we would probably be applauded. But consider what Paul wrote Timothy one chapter over in 2 Tim 3:12. There he wrote, ***“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*** You see, to live godly in Christ (to find your holiness there and no where else) exposes the evil of thinking anything to the contrary and that brings on persecution. All of God's elect who suffered with Christ as He represented them in His suffering on the cross shall also, in time suffer for His sake in their walk of faith
8. And as our text indicates, this gospel is worthy to be accepted or warrants our faith because all of these shall reign with Him. This speaks of that spiritual kingdom or reign ó the reign of grace which is through the righteousness established by the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Now if your hope is based on your possession of that very righteousness made yours by God's gracious imputation of it to you, then you too must reign with Him in the everlasting kingdom.

IV. **Closing:** This is a faithful saying ó a faithful gospel. As I hope you've seen today, it is faithful, reliable, completely trustworthy to be believed unto eternal salvation because all who do believe this Gospel ó who are granted faith so as to embrace from the heart this message of how God saves sinners by Christ alone ó all these are one with Him in the eyes of God's law and justice and He, the God-man did not fail to accomplish their salvation

Can you like Paul say, “This is my Gospel?” Is your gospel a faithful saying because your entire hope of salvation is derived from this union (this oneness) with Christ as your Substitute and Representative? As we'll examine in more detail in part 2 of this series, if your hope is in Christ and Him alone, it cannot fail for He cannot fail. ***“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: <sup>12</sup>If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:...”*** Look unto Him!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.