

Remember Jesus Christ, Risen

2 Timothy 2:8

Resurrection Sunday 2016

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REMEMBER Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel. Amen? Time to pack up so we can go enjoy our Easter ham, right? Not so fast. Every year I like to use this shorter second sermon to draw out something practical from the resurrection.

What I want you to catch is the importance of what Paul is saying here for a few moments. Paul is writing this from a Roman prison: “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner” (1:8); “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains” (1:16). Paul is writing this with the shadow death about to overtake him: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come” (4:6).

So here is Paul, relegated to Rome, going to the grave, and what is he thinking about? The resurrection. But not his resurrection *per se*, but Jesus’. And what really brings this out is that back there in Asia Minor ministering is Timothy. And his life is going to go on pastoring his people in Ephesus.

And what does Paul tell him to do? **Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.** To **remember** is not just mental recollection; it is a call to action. So in this passage, Paul is telling Timothy to keep the resurrection of Jesus Christ central in his life and ministry. There is an empty tomb and therefore an occupied throne in heaven upon which our Lord rules and reigns over every area of our lives down here on earth has.

When I doubt because God seems absent, because faith doesn't seem to be working out for me, or because all the people I know and things I see online are against my faith, I am to **remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.** I've mentioned before and it bears repeating that my best friend from college who went through personal reformation with me and who went with me to seminary is now a self-professed "hopeful agnostic." And the last time we spoke about all his philosophical arguments and objections that caused him to doubt, I said to him, "All those questions are valid, but they don't reckon with the fact that Jesus Christ rose again!" The tomb is empty, therefore my faith has substance. The empty tomb weighs more than all my objections.

When I am depressed because I wake up only to hear the news of yet another terrorist attack, of my financial uncertainty with another stock

market dip, with job insecurity because of the economy, and the chaotic campaigning of prideful politicians, I am to **remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead**. He's Lord. He's got me exactly where he wants me. And I can trust him. Paul says earlier in chapter 1, "for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me" (1:12). Literally Paul says "he is able to guard *my deposit*," which can either be the gospel itself that God has given him or Paul's life that he has given to God. Either way, Paul's point is that God is able to care for us in this life until it's end.

When I feel like life has reached a dead end and I have no meaning, no purpose, I am to **remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead**. The cross and resurrection are the center of human history. Everything moves toward them as a goal and from them everything flows as the source. Paul had dreams of preaching in Rome and then going on all the way to Spain. But there he was in a prison, awaiting death. Don't you think he, too, must have had thoughts of disappointment and abandonment? But you see how his remembrance of Jesus' resurrection gave his life meaning and purpose at the end of our reading in verses 11-13: if we die with Jesus, we'll live with Jesus; if we endure, we'll reign with him. Amen.