

“The Word Unbound”  
2 Timothy 2:9  
(Preached at Trinity, May 15, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verse 3** Paul admonished Timothy to press on, to endure hardship as a follower of Jesus Christ.  
**2 Timothy 2:3 NAU** - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."  
Paul used three metaphors to describe the steadfast endurance of the Christian.  
We press on as a faithful soldier.  
We press on as a well-disciplined athlete.  
We press on as a hard-working farmer.
2. In **Verses 8-10** Paul gives four additional reasons why the faithful Christian must be willing to endure whatever hardship he might face in his Christian service.
  - A. Remember the Resurrected Christ  
**Verse 8** - "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead"
  - B. Remember the Unbound Word of God  
**Verse 9** - "I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned."  
They may bind and imprison us, but God's Word will not be bound.
  - C. Remember the Salvation of the Elect  
**Verse 10** - "I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen"
  - D. Remember the Promise of our Reward  
**Verses 11-12** – We will live and reign with Christ.
3. Last time we looked at the first.  
We are serving the living Christ who delivered us from our offences and now sits at the right hand of majesty. He's alive! He's ruling and defending His people!  
For Paul, it was a small thing to deny himself for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ who walks with him. We must never forget the words of our Lord.  
**Matthew 28:20 NAU** - "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
4. In **Verse 9** Paul states again his own personal situation. He was suffering unimaginable hardship. He was in prison as a common criminal.  
We see here once again the principle of when civil disobedience is not only permissible but required, when we must choose between God's law and man's law
  1. Paul actually did break the law. He was being treated as a criminal because in the eyes of the Roman govt. he *was* a criminal – he broke the law which forbade him from preaching the gospel of Christ.  
As a Roman citizen, his chains testified that he was an enemy of Rome.

2. The reason he broke their law, however, was because they were demanding that he break the God's Law. It was the same charge Peter faced years before.  
**Acts 5:27-29 NAU** - "When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."
3. As long as obeying the civil authorities does not require us to disobey the law of God we are bound to obey.
4. We must also note that although Paul was arrested unjustly, he still submitted to the consequences of breaking the civil law. Paul makes clear the reason for doing this. He had a higher priority, a higher goal, a higher purpose. Rather than becoming bogged down with his own situation, his highest purpose was serving the resurrected Christ by preaching the Gospel for the sake of the elect.
5. Paul uses a deliberate play on words.  
 Paul was bound and imprisoned but God's Word cannot be bound. They may arrest us, imprison us, try to muzzle us – but God's Word will not be muzzled. It will not be bound. It will accomplish perfectly the plan and purpose of God.  
**Isaiah 55:10-11 NAU** - "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;  
<sup>11</sup> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."
5. In what ways is it true that God's Word cannot be bound?
- I. The Word of God cannot be bound so that it cannot go forth into the world with life-changing power
  - A. God's servants may be bound but God's Word shall continue to go forth
    1. Paul's imprisonment did not hinder the gospel  
 He merely preached to the guards
    2. We should pray for this.  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1 NAU** - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;"
    3. Even the death of God's servants will not hinder the gospel.
    4. You may silence a single Christian, but God's Word will march on.  
 John Huss, the pre-eminent Czech theologian and reformer died 100 years before Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis upon the church door in Wittenberg. His last words were, "In 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed."  
 The name "Huss" is translated goose in Czech.  
 Tradition records his last words, "They will roast a goose now, but after a one hundred years they will hear a swan sing."

- B. Satan has tried for centuries to destroy God's Word without success
1. His infamous words to Eve in the Garden were, "Hath God said?"
  2. During the enlightenment when deism was spreading rapidly, Voltaire proclaimed that within twenty-five years the Bible would be forgotten and Christianity would be a thing of the past. Forty years after his death in 1778 the Bible and other Christian literature were being printed in what had once been Voltaire's own home.
  3. Governments have banned it; prisoners have been denied it – but it cannot be bound.
  4. The Book may be burned but the truth shall abide  
**Psalm 117:2 NAU** - "His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!"  
**1 Peter 1:24 NAU** - "For, "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord abides forever." And this is the word which was preached to you."
  5. Martin Luther:  
 Let goods and kindred go,  
 this mortal life also;  
 the body they may kill:  
 God's truth abideth still;  
 his kingdom is forever!
- C. The Word is not dependent upon our personal freedom
1. The first 300 years of Christianity existed under great danger  
 At one time there were 600 miles of catacombs under the city of Rome, most dug by generations of Christians. The catacombs served as meeting and burial places. A common inscription found on the walls was, "God's Word is not bound"<sup>1</sup>
  2. Many today feel that the spread of the Gospel is dependent upon our personal freedom – they equate the fight for personal rights with the fight for the Gospel.  
 John MacArthur:  
 "Many Christians are under the illusion that God's Word has been influential in the Western world, especially in such democracies as the United States, primarily because of legal guarantees of freedom of religion, and that the fight to keep that freedom is therefore a fight to preserve the power of the gospel. In fact, some Christians who would never think of confronting society with the bold and demanding gospel and being censured for it will strongly fight for some social or political issue in ways that might get them arrested. Religious freedom is certainly commendable, and Christians who enjoy it should be grateful for and take advantage of the opportunities it affords for worship, witness, and service. But the power of God's Word has never been dependent on man's protection or subject to man's restriction."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 59.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 59.

- c. In China the Christian church is highly regulated. Churches have to be registered, and most have marched to the demands of the government. But many exist as underground churches, at great peril. Churches are often seized and destroyed and arrests are common, but they cannot be destroyed. The Word of God will not be bound. The Chinese government lists the number of Christians at 38 million, yet there are estimates that the number exceeds 120 million. God's Word cannot be bound.
  - C. The Word of God is not bound by the dictates of culture
    - 1. Our culture sets forth its own rules and regulations and expects conformity. Abortion is approved, divorce is normalized, sexual perversion is seen as a virtue and any disagreement is labeled as hate.
    - 2. God's Word is not bound in such a culture. We have a Book and it will not be bound by the ways of man.
  - D. The Word of God will not be bound by our disobedience.
    - 1. Many who call themselves Christians will never bring the Gospel to a single person – but God's Word will not be bound.
    - 2. Many who call themselves Christians will not endure till the end  
**2 Timothy 4:10** – "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica"
    - 3. The Gospel continues to prevail. God has always had His faithful remnant.
- II. The Word of God cannot be bound so that it cannot enter effectually into the hearts of God's elect.
  - A. God sovereignly, powerfully, and effectually speaks His Word to the hearts of His people  
**1 Thessalonians 2:13 NAU** - "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."  
**James 1:18 NAU** - "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures."
    - 1. The Word of God has an internal effect upon the heart  
**Hebrews 4:12 NAU** - "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."
    - 2. God can save even the worst skeptic or scoffer
    - 3. No man or devil shall prevent this  
**John 6:37 NAU** - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."  
**2 Corinthians 4:6 NAU** - "For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

4. God's Word will not be hindered from God's divine purpose  
**Isaiah 55:11 NAU** - "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."
  5. God will save each and every one of His own  
**2 Peter 3:9 NAU** - "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
- B. Consider your own salvation
1. Did not God choose you before time began?
  2. Did He not determine when and where you would be born?
  3. Did He not determine every situation of your life?
  4. Could anything have prevented His Word from effectually entering into your heart? God's Word shall not be bound

### Conclusion:

Here is the ultimate question. Why is it impossible for God's Word to be bound?

1. It is impossible for God's Word to be bound because it is the voice of the Almighty
  - a. God is subject to none, receives counsel from none – He works all things according to the counsel of His own will  
**Ephesians 1:11 NAU** - "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,"
  - b. That which He speaks He shall surely bring to pass  
**Isaiah 46:11 NAU** - "Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, *surely* I will do it."
  - c. The preaching of the Word is God's appointed means for saving the elect.  
 His almighty power will not allow it to be bound
2. It is impossible for God's Word to be bound because it is attended by the working of the Holy Spirit  
**John 3:8 NAU** - "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
3. It is impossible for God's Word to be bound because of its effect upon the hearts of those in whom it dwells
  - a. It creates great zeal and enthusiasm
  - b. It creates boldness and confidence
  - c. It creates a burden to spread it abroad