

Steadfast Living Approved

Paul was writing a letter to Timothy.

Timothy was a young man who was developing his understanding of Jesus.

Paul, on the other hand was a seasoned disciple of Jesus.

He wrote this letter to Timothy around 66 AD

By 66 AD Paul had been a disciple of Jesus for more than 30 years.

He knew what he was talking about when he wrote to Timothy.

He knew the intensity of ministry.

He had written to the church in Corinth about 10 years earlier.

"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23b-28)

Paul had seen and experienced it all.

There wasn't a hardship that Paul hadn't encountered as a disciple.

As he wrote to Timothy he knew he was nearing the end of his life.

He was in his final imprisonment.

He had already been given the death penalty.

"For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:6-7)

It was just a matter of waiting.

There was no prospect of an acquittal.

There had been no earthquakes that shook fetters loose.

No angels appeared who would open doors and lead him to the street.

So he was writing this final letter to Timothy.

Paul wanted to be certain Timothy knew the essential of a disciple.

Timothy, on the other hand, was a relatively new disciple.

There was much he had to learn.

He was very much like an apprentice to Paul.

We know what an apprentice is.

Most of us are familiar with story of The Sorcerer's Apprentice.

That was an apprentice who had much to learn.

You didn't want to turn your back for long on that apprentice.

An apprentice needs to develop skills.

They need to gain understanding about their trade.

An apprentice can leave people uneasy.

Imagine calling a plumber to work on a project in your home.

And the plumber says, "I'm sorry, I'm awfully busy these days.

"But don't worry, I'll send my apprentice over right away."

"Well how long has this apprentice been with you?" you ask.

"Two weeks and two days now - But he's very good."

"What is he good at?"

"You should see him hold the other end of a long section of pipe."

"And he knows all the tools by name."

"Has he ever installed a drain?"

"Well no, not yet, we'll get to that next week."

"Has he installed a tub or sink or shower?"

"No but he's read the manual about it."

You'll look for another plumber.

You don't want cold water to pour out of the hot tap.

You don't want to find a leak inside your wall.

You don't want drain water coming out of the shower head.

When you flush the toilet you never want to see it again.

You want a master plumber or electrician or carpenter.

Paul was a master disciple.

He knew what it meant to be an apprentice Jesus.

But he had learned what was needed to be an approved workman.

He knew there were no short cuts to living by faith.

He said to Timothy, "Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel is the power of God." (1:8)

He said, "For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do." (1:11, 12a)

Timothy had to clearly understand the life of a disciple.

Paul wanted to teach his young apprentice what was essential.

He wanted Timothy to also become a workman approved.

We find his desire for Timothy in 2:15.

This is not the approval that we seek from others.

Paul wanted Timothy to be approved by God.

What makes it possible for a person to be approved by God?

There is only one thing.

There was one thing he wanted Timothy to remember.

He knew that if Timothy forgot this fact he would never last.

If he forgot this important truth he could not be a disciple of Jesus.

He might forget lots of other things but this he could not forget.

What was so important to Paul?

We find it in verse 8.

Only one thing brings God's approval upon your life, my life, Timothy's life.

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead."

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You can't be an approved disciple of Jesus if you ever forget that.

Apart from the resurrection of Jesus there is no steadfast living.

Why was it so important for the master to instill this into the apprentice?

I The resurrection carries with it the MEMORY of the Cross.

There is only one way Jesus could be risen from the dead.

Jesus had to be dead in order to rise from the dead.

When we remember the resurrection we also remember the cross.

"If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (vs. 11)

The cross was an instrument of torture.

It was the worst form of execution.

It was the worst form of torture.

Nothing else even comes close.

Nothing else can combine the intensity of pain, the feeling of drowning, the starvation and thirst and the feeling life drain away, all the while being conscious and unable to move.

The flies and parasites would begin to attack within minutes.

The sun would beat down mercilessly.

Timothy, remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

If you forget the resurrection you will forget Jesus' death on the cross.

He died on that cross for you.

The resurrection reminds you of Jesus' sacrifice, dying in your place.

No matter what, never forget the resurrection.

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead."

There was a second reason Paul told Timothy to remember Christ risen.

II The Resurrection carries the MESSAGE of the Gospel. (vs. 9b)

Never forget the resurrection or you will kill the message.

If we forget the resurrection we can't rightly handle the word of truth.

Paul testified that it was because of the gospel that he suffered.

It was for the gospel that he was wearing fetters like a criminal.

Without the resurrection we have no message to offer to people.

Paul's prayer was, "That I may know him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." (Phil. 3:10, 11)

There was a third reason Paul told Timothy to remember Christ risen.

III The Resurrection carries the MEANING of Life. (vs. 10)

It was the resurrection that enabled Paul to be steadfast.

Because of the resurrection Paul could endure everything.

The only thing that made a difference in Paul's life was the resurrection.

He said to the Colossian church; "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)

Why was remembering the resurrection so important to Paul?

Paul knew people would talk about anything that has nothing to do with God.

They would dispute over things that ruin a life.

Godless chatter could not add meaning to life (vs. 16).

Godless chatter leads to more and more ungodliness.

It will be like a gangrene that gnaws away at anything healthy.

Paul cited individuals who had already written the resurrection off.

Without the resurrection people will swerve from the truth.

They had already capsized the faith of some.

There is no steadfast living because they have no foundation.

Paul knew there would be all kinds of things to make the resurrection fade.

As time goes on the list gets longer.

Paul saw that in the last days there would be excessive stress.

Why would there be stress?

Stress increases when people do not remember the resurrection.

The resurrection is forgotten when people make something else central to life.

In chapter three Paul gives a whole list of things.

They would distract us from 'Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.'

"For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly."

The RSV tells us to avoid stress-making people like!

They will distract you from the truth.

They will try to make the life of faith easy.

People who should live by faith "will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings." (2 Timothy 4:3)

Paul says they will turn from the truth and wander into myths (4:4).

(READING FROM TARA)

The resurrection is no myth.

The resurrection is a true event that defies reality and requires faith.

The resurrection carries the memory of the Cross.

The resurrection carries the message of the Gospel.

And the resurrection carries the meaning of life.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

We can't approach our communion table if we are not approved by remembering the resurrection.

The cup and bread are meaningless without the resurrection.

They carry no significance if Jesus is not risen from the dead.

It will be a dead ritual and nothing more.

But we have a risen Saviour.

We celebrate His life not of two thousand years ago.

We celebrate His living presence with us right here, right now.

God has not changed His standard of approval.

What is central to your life right now?

"As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5)

Closing song May the Words of My Mouth