

20th Sunday after Pentecost, 2010C

“The Word of God is Not Bound”

¹You then, my child, be strengthened¹ by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

⁸Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

¹⁰Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

¹²if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

¹³if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself. (2 Timothy 2:1–13)

INTRODUCTION

The basis for this morning’s sermon comes from God’s Word through St. Paul the apostle to Timothy, whom Paul calls, **My true son in the faith** (1 Timothy 1:2) and also, **my beloved son** (2 Timothy 1:2)...

Here, with these few words, St. Paul encourages his son Timothy to take courage, to endure hardship, to keep doing what God has called him to do.

For even though Paul himself is in chains and bound, God’s Word is not bound.

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11)

Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4)

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul had told Timothy to **Remain in Ephesus, that he command² some that they teach no other doctrine.**

¹ ἐνδυναμοῦ ἐν τῇ χάριτι τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, NKJ has ‘be strong’; ESV has be strengthened. The verb is an imperative, present, passive.

² ἵνα παραγγείλῃς τισὶν μὴ ἐτεροδιδασκαλεῖν, in order that he command some not to teach another doctrine

To Timothy was given the command to instruct (1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:16), to teach (1 Timothy 1:3, 4:11; 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:2), to preach, (2 Timothy 4:2), , **to guard what was committed to his trust** (1 Timothy 6:20), to **Hold fast the pattern of sound words which he had heard from Paul, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus** (2 Timothy 1:13), to **Take heed to himself and to the doctrine**, and to **Continue in them, for in doing this he would save both himself and those who hear you** (1 Timothy 4:16).

This sounds a lot like what a Pastor is to do. It sounds a lot like what a Pastor is to do because this is exactly what a pastor does.

DUTIES OF A PASTOR

A pastor teaches, preaches, guards, and holds fast to the doctrine—this is His calling. He is to serve faithfully, only according to the Word and not according to the world. The world says one thing, but God says another. And the Word that God says is the Word that the pastor is to say.

You might not always like to hear it. And the pastor might not always like to say it, but such is his calling, to say what God has said, to preach what God would have him preach.

THE FAITHFUL PASTOR

Such is what the faithful pastor does. He will speak and declare what God has made known. He will teach and preach salvation only in Christ, and no one and nothing else, even as St. Peter says, **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved** (Acts 4:12). There is only one Savior—Jesus the Christ!

The faithful pastor will ‘make a big deal’ about justification by grace through faith because such is the center of the Christian faith. Apart from this teaching, there is no Christian. Get this doctrine wrong and you have stepped outside of Christianity into idolatry and heathenism.

The faithful pastor, in preaching thus, distinguishes between the Law and the Gospel. The Law is that which condemns. The Gospel is the Good News of sins forgiven you in Christ. The faithful pastor preaches both. He preaches you to hell by calling your sin—sin, and he preaches you to heaven by declaring Jesus your Savior, for in Him your sins are forgiven you. In Jesus, your sins are no more.

By preaching thus, by heeding to the godly doctrine, and by continuing in these, your pastor seeks your salvation, for your salvation is in Christ and none other.

FALSE TEACHINGS AND DOCTRINES

Only by continuing in what is right and true according to God’s Holy Word is your pastor doing his job as a called and ordained servant of the word in declaring to you what God would have you hear, that you be certain of God’s grace and favor to you because of Christ, that you not be

led astray by the false teachings and false doctrines that are everywhere out there; for by these, many are led astray and even confirmed in their unbelief.

And if these who are led astray remain in their unbelief, heaven will not be their eternal home, but rather hell and everlasting condemnation. The faith in Christ that they might have had before will not help them. Nor will it save them.

FALSE PREACHERS AND TEACHERS

Such are the results of false preachers and teachers, those who are faithless to their God-given duties as God's servants. They do not concern themselves with being true to God's Word. They follow the itching ears of their hearers (2 Timothy 4:3). They do not declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And because of this, they lead their hearers to find salvation in another other than Christ. And any other savior than Jesus is no savior at all from sin, death, or the devil.

There is only one Savior whom the Father sent into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it through Him (John 3:17). There is only one Savior who paid the price for the sins of the whole world, for all of your sins, for all of your sins against God and against His servants, against what is right and true, your sins against what God has commanded, what God has given you to do and to believe.

All of these sins—all of your sins—Jesus paid for on the cross with the shedding of His blood. This is the Gospel. The precious Good News of your salvation. God does not count your sins against you on account of Christ.

THE ARTICLE BY WHICH THE CHURCH STANDS OR FALLS (AC IV)

This is the article by which the church stands or falls. It is the doctrine of justification by faith, spoken of this way in the Augsburg Confession, found in the Book of Concord and subscribed to by our pastors and congregations alike:

¹ It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, ² when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. ³ For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5. (AC IV, Justification)

HOW SUCH FAITH IS OBTAINED (AC V)

Immediately following this heavenly doctrine of our salvation in Christ, the Augsburg Confession continues by talking about how you obtain such faith:

¹ To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. ² Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and

where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. ³ *And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this. (AC V, Office of the Holy Ministry)*

It is through the very means of Word and Sacrament, through even the Word preached, and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, that the Lord gives His Holy Spirit, who gives and strengthens faith.

It is as we believe according Dr. Luther's explanation of the 3rd Article³ of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism, where he writes:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. (SC)

Such faith in Jesus Christ, created, sustained, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel is not a man-made faith. It is God given, as St. Paul tells us in Romans 10, **Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ** (Romans 10:17). It is a faith not of the world, but of God (Matthew 16:17).⁴ And this is just the reason why such necessity is given to right doctrine, to teaching only what is true, and for the one who preaches to preach what is only according to God's Word, in essence, to be faithful. Such was St. Paul's order to Timothy, whom he told to remain in Ephesus, and such is the order of our Lord Jesus to His called and ordained servants today. And such preaching you, too, are to hear.

IT'S HARD TO BE FAITHFUL

But these things aren't easy. St. Paul knew this. St. Timothy knew this. And pastors today know this, as well as congregations who know the Word and have genuine concern for Christ and truth.

It's hard being faithful. It takes time. It takes effort and due diligence. It takes energy. It means suffering. It means persecution (Matthew 5:11).⁵ It means walking *The Lonely Way*⁶ when others are not. It means hatred from the world (John 15:18-19; 17:14; 1 John 3:13).⁷ It means struggle with your own flesh, with your own sin, and with the sins of others.

³ "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the + life everlasting. Amen."

⁴ Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

⁵ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matthew 5:11). The "when" (ὅταν) implies that reviling and persecution *will* happen on account of Christ (ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ).

⁶ Herman Sasse, *The Lonely Way, Two Volumes* (St. Louis: CPH, 2001, 2002).

⁷ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

BE STRENGTHENED BY THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS

This is why St. Paul says to Timothy, **Be strengthened (strong) by (in) the grace that is in Christ Jesus**. It's only by God's grace in Christ that you can and that you do continue in the true faith.

You, too, therefore, **Be strengthened (strong) by (in) the grace that is in Christ Jesus**. Hear God's Word. Believe His promises. Take His Word of forgiveness as your own. Take eat—Take drink of Christ's body and blood, given for you for the remission of sins, for here, in these blessed gifts of God, God does indeed strengthen you and preserve you in the truth faith. Here, our Lord serves you with eternal life.

Take God at His Word. Don't doubt or disbelieve because of what you see or feel, because of what the world says or because of what *you* think. The Words of our Lord are spirit and they are life (John 6:63). And they are for you—that you continue and endure in the faith of Jesus Christ, that you be absolutely sure and certain of God's love for you in Christ, that you know and believe that your sins are forgiven you in Christ Jesus.

It doesn't really matter what the world says, or how you might feel, or what you might think. What really matters is what God says, for only what God says to you in Christ gives true hope and even eternal life:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him (v11-12). St. Paul writes that you were buried with Christ in Holy Baptism. You therefore are no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:4, 14).

Being strengthened (strong) by (in) the grace that is in Christ Jesus, believing God's promises in Christ according to His Word, you will endure, for such is God's promise, and you will reign with Him, for such is His Word.

Our Lord is faithful to all of His Word. Therefore, as you abide in *it*, so will you continue to abide in Christ.

WARNING

But to those who do not continue in Christ and His Word, God still remains faithful, for St. Paul also writes, **If we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself** (v12-13).

Only **he who endures to the end will be saved** (Mathew 10:33; 24:13). The one not keeping the true faith will not. Take heed. Be watchful. **Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David**. Amen.

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you" (1 John 3:13).