

Lecture 22 – 2 Timothy 1-2

Today we arrive at the last of Paul's letters. To help give you some context of where we are in history, at the end of the book of Acts we found Paul a prisoner in Rome – but it wasn't too terrible. He was living in a rented house in hopes to make an appeal to Caesar. There were several Caesars during the Roman Empire, and, no, none of them was named "*Salad*". The Caesar that was in office at the time was Nero, and he was considered the worst of them all.

The sequence of events following Acts 28 aren't exactly clear, but most believe that Paul was released from prison and made one final journey preaching the Gospel to places that might have included Militas, Corinth, Troas, Ephesus, and maybe even Spain. He was arrested again and brought back to Rome. Either during his first or second imprisonment, it is believed Paul gave a presentation of the Gospel to Caesar Nero. Nero rejected Paul's message, and it is believed as a result of this rejection, he became possessed by Satan and literally went mad. He decided he wanted to be the one known as the one who rebuilt Rome, so most historians believe that it was he who burned down Rome in A.D. 64. He blamed the Christians – claiming they did this because they wanted to be the "light of the world". He also called Christians cannibals because of the symbolism of communion.

His persecution of Christians got so bad that he would ride through his palace grounds at night shrieking in glee as Christians were being dipped in wax and burned as human torches. I've heard many presentations on the character of the Antichrist during the Tribulation, and many have suggested that the same evil spirit that was in Nero will be in the Antichrist – I've even heard arguments that the Antichrist will be a resurrected Nero. In any event, he was one bad dude, and what might have pushed him over the edge was his rejection of Paul's presentation of the Gospel.

Now, with this second arrest, Paul is no longer in a “Club Fed” type of prison. He is likely in a dark, damp, and dirty hole. His death sentence of being beheaded is likely just a few days away, and he knows it. And what is he doing? Is he complaining? Is he seeking to blame someone else? Is he seeking Judge Judy? – No – he is writing a letter of encouragement to Timothy – his son in the faith. That, my friends, is confidence in Whom you believe. May we all reach that point of faith, amen?

To further impress upon you the high level of Paul’s faith, given his dire circumstances, look at how he begins this final letter in verse 1, “*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.*” Here he is facing his impending execution, and what is he proclaiming? “*The promise of life that is in Christ Jesus*”! 1 John 5:11-12a tells us, “*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life.*” When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are born again. We are given a new life in the spirit that lives forever into eternity. Paul, facing his earthly demise, is proclaiming that there is an eternal life that continues even when we breathe our last breath. This is the great hope we have because of our faith in the finished sacrificial work of Jesus on the Cross. Again, what great faith this man had!

In most of Paul’s salutations he would offer grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus. In this one, he includes mercy. Grace and mercy are not the same. Mercy is not getting punished for what we deserve. Grace is getting good that we **don’t** deserve. Paul, knowing his time is about up, is not only asking for God’s grace to be upon Timothy but also for God’s mercy. He knows Timothy is going to be picking up the torch and Paul knows what he has suffered for his faith. Like any good father – be it biological or spiritual – you don’t want to see your child suffer, so he’s asking for God’s mercy.

In verse 3 we learn that Paul is constantly remembering Timothy in prayer. God will partner with people who are committed to prayer. This doesn't necessarily mean he *won't* partner with people who don't pray much, but He will most certainly work with those who have an active and persistent prayer life. Regarding prayer, I encourage you to understand that it is not a monologue – a long wish list. Prayer is a ***dialogue*** – a conversation between a heavenly Father and His beloved child. If you are in a situation where you don't think you can do anything, you can always pray. What does the Bible say about prayer? “*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*” James 5:16.

In verse 5 we get a little insight into how Timothy became such a man of faith – his mother and grandmother – both women of faith - no doubt had a huge influence on him. I can think of no more important objective in life than for a parent or grandparent to live and teach their children and grandchildren the Gospel and the truth of God's Word. I have often thought how different my life would have been had I grew up in a home where God's Word was revered and lived out. Vickie and I are first generation Christians, so we're figuring things out “on the fly”. Our deepest hope is that we can teach and exhibit God's love to our children and grandchildren, so, at a minimum; they'll be with us through eternity, (which, thank God, they will) but that they will impact the world for Christ.

In verses 6 & 7 Paul speaks to the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and the gifts He gives us. Paul encourages Timothy to “*fan into flame the gift of God*”. Why would we need to do this? First, it would be helpful to remember what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are: they include messages of wisdom, messages of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, or discernment, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, helping, and guidance. Now I'm not going to get into the debate as to whether or not all of these

gifts are still available today. The issue at hand in verse 6 is why we would need to fan into flame these gifts?

Do you know that each one of you have been given one or more gifts of the Spirit? I don't know which one or ones each of you have, but I know you have at least one. I can say that because part of your responsibility of being a follower of Jesus Christ is to minister to others and present yourself in the image of Christ. We cannot do this without the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our flesh. The fleshly part of us makes us think either we can't do something or we can do something on our own – but we really can't. God never asks us to do something for Him without giving us the ability to do it. What Paul is telling Timothy is the gifts God has given to him need to be put to work – we're given gifts to use for God's glory.

What keeps us from doing that? In Timothy's case, and I would argue in everyone else's case – including you and me – it is timidity, which is rooted in what? – Fear. When we confess Jesus as our Savior, we're given the Holy Spirit as a down payment for our redemption – a promise that we are eternally God's children. With God dwelling in us, we have access to the things of God to overcome the things of the world – our flesh. In my opinion, the greatest hurdle we all face is fear. That is why a “life verse” for each of us should be 1 John 4:18, *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”* 1 Corinthians 13:8a reminds us, *“Love never fails”*. My friends for those of us who think we have a **fear** problem, that isn't our problem. We have a **faith** problem.

Dr. Del Tacket, who pioneered a great series called the “Truth Project” speaks to this issue of faith when he says, *“If we really believe what we say we believe is really true, our lives will never be the same.”* Please know I'm not seeking to condemn or judge any of you who struggle with fear – I'm right there

with you on this issue. But one of the most beautiful byproducts of a deepening faith in God is the elimination of fear – the recognition that He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. If we truly believe that God is love, and love never fails, then we have nothing to fear because the fear-conquering power of God’s love dwells in us. Next time you feel afraid, ask God to reveal His fear-conquering love in you. Paul confirms this in our memory verse that the Spirit of God gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

Verse 8 speaks to the truth that there is suffering for the gospel. I’m not a fan of this promise, but you don’t have to look hard at today’s society that suffering for the gospel is absolutely real. I’m going to ask you to think about why that’s the case. What is so bad about the gospel? Isn’t it good news? Isn’t the testimony that the Creator of mankind is so heartbroken over its self-inflicted eternal death sentence as a result of its sin that He would sacrifice Himself to demonstrate the length He will go to in demonstrating His love for them and save them a *great thing*? I mean, seriously, why do people have a problem with this truth?

Because they have been deceived – deeply deceived. Have you ever been lied to? Until you found out the truth, didn’t you staunchly defend your position – you might have even gotten angry or hostile over someone else’s efforts to make you realize you believe a lie. That’s what we’re dealing with in this fallen world. They don’t believe in sin and its consequences. They don’t believe in eternal judgment. They don’t believe in God. They believe they’re in control. And who is the one that is feeding them all these lies? –Satan.

For those of us who are going to “get in the game” to seek to reveal the truth to these deceived people, Satan is going to make us pay the price. Is it worth it? I once again give you Romans 8:18, “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*” Is suffering for the gospel worth it? –God promises us it absolutely is. People will never know Who

we stand for until we stand up and reveal to them Who that is. When we do this, His glory will be revealed.

Verse 10 tells us, *“but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* When Jesus Christ died on a cross and was resurrected, He destroyed death to those who believe in Him. **The Christian does not die.** 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 tells us, *“For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling.”* The Christian doesn’t die – we move onto something far greater. Jesus said to Martha in John 11:25 and 26, *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”*

Then He finishes this statement with a question, *“Do you believe this?”* Now I’m going to ask you, “Do **you** believe this.” Better yet, I’m going to reapply Dr. Tacket’s statement, *“Do you really believe what you say you believe is really true?”* I hope so, because if you do, your life will never be the same again, and it’s going to be filled with the promise of hope.

Verse 12 sharpens the focus of our faith, *“That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.”* Notice he doesn’t say “what” I have believed – he says “*Whom*” I have believed. The Christian faith is not a faith in a doctrine. It’s not a faith in humanity. It’s not a faith in creation. Christianity is 100% about a faith in the God-man, Jesus Christ.

I manage a division that has about 80 people in it. There are 10 people who report directly to me, and they supervise the balance of the people in the division. While I do my best to deliver a message of commitment to the company, these

people who report to me repeatedly tell me they work hard not for the company, but for me. I'm not telling you this to demonstrate how great a manager I am – my point is people relate best to people, not things, and they do this because of relationships. We can say we see God in nature and creation, and that is biblical. But there's one thing people don't learn of God in creation – that He loves them. Paul's point here in verse 12 is that his faith is not in a thing, it's in a **Person**, it's in Jesus Christ who has proven God's love for us by His sacrifice on a cross for our sins.

So in verses 6-14, Paul is exhorting Timothy to examine Paul – his faith and his actions – to help him prepare for living life without him. In the final few verses of chapter one he reveals another painful subject of a life in Christ – the abandonment of friends and supporters. He singles out Phygelus and Hermogenes as people who deserted him – imagine having your names immortalized in the Holy Scriptures as deserters to the Apostle Paul. This should make us think about our devotion to our Christian brothers and sisters. Paul singles out one particular brother who didn't abandon him, Onesiphorus. He was a loyal supporter of Paul's – he searched Paul out to find ways to help him.

When we went through our trials, we found out whom our closest friends were. Now I don't condemn those that didn't offer help, and I completely forgive them. My point is I will never forget those who stood by our side while we were suffering. It's not easy standing by people who are going through trials is it? You want to help them, but you can't – at least not in the way you might want to. Trust me, if you just stay with them, let them cry, talk, grieve, or whatever, you've done more than you can possibly know. That is a gift of kindness, and when you're in a trial, simple acts of kindness are cherished.

Heading into chapter 2, the homework asks a good question, "*In what did Paul tell Timothy to find his strength?*" As you know, the answer is "*the grace that*

is in Christ Jesus”. It’s really important we understand what this means. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us, “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*” We are saved by the grace of God – remember what I said grace was? - Getting good that we don’t deserve.

That salvation, though, is not just a one-time event – it is an ongoing process. Because we continue to sin, we find ourselves feeling condemned, guilty, ashamed, and all of the other junk that comes with sin. We must rely on the permanent forgiveness of sin that Jesus purchased for us on the cross. Our salvation is regularly being applied to ward off the eternal effects of post confession sins. Moreover, our salvation is growing in us the **new** person – the new creation. If our salvation at the time of our confession is from God’s grace, then our ongoing salvation must also be of grace. We’re not to find any strength in our works. Our strength is and always will be in God’s sovereign grace, which He pours out on those He loves. *Being strong in grace is really trusting in God’s love for you* – even when you’re not acting very lovable.

Verse 3 equates walking in the faith to a good soldier. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “soldier”? The Army, the Marines, or the military, right? What are they there for? - To protect us and fight the enemy. This analogy Paul uses should not be taken lightly. I’ve said this before many times - there is an ongoing war between the forces of good – the forces of God and the forces of evil – the forces of Satan. Jesus won the war for the souls of who believe in Him, but the battle rages on and will rage on until Satan and his forces are once and for all thrown into the lake of fire. Until then, we must be on guard and put on the full armor of God that Lin talked about when we covered Ephesians chapter 6.

The next verse warns us not to get entangled in civilian affairs. What does this mean? We’re not to get caught up in the things of this world. Who cares about

the Kardashians? Is it really such a tragedy that the stock price of Apple isn't as high as it used to be? Is what that person said about me on Facebook or Twitter really going to ruin my life? I'm amazed at what we get ourselves all worked up about – especially on things we have absolutely no control over – which are virtually everything!

Paul goes on in verse 4 after telling us not to get tangled in civilian affairs, but to try to please our commanding officer. Who is our commanding officer? God. How do we please God? – By our works? No. By our tithes? No. What did we learn in Hebrews that told us how it was impossible to please God without one thing and one thing only? – Faith. Our faith pleases God – our commander. Paul goes on to relate our faith to that of an athlete and that of a farmer. The emphasis on these latter two comparisons is on doing things lawfully – what is right - and being patient to allow God to grow what we plant.

Verse 8, “*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,*” speaks to the centerpiece of the Gospel – the resurrection. Easter is coming up shortly, and the whole purpose of Easter is to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *He is risen!* What's the response? He has risen indeed! Without the resurrection, there is no Gospel. The resurrection is the proof that Jesus's sacrifice for our sin was acceptable to the Father. The resurrection proved that Jesus conquered death. Furthermore, by Paul pointing out that Jesus was descended from David, he is proclaiming Jesus is the Messiah. This was hard news for the Jewish believers – it still is hard news – that their Messiah would be killed. They didn't and still don't get He had to die in order for them to be saved from their sins

Paul continues in verse 9 that he is suffering for his faith to the point of being chained like a criminal. He then makes this great bold statement, “*But God's word is not chained.*” This letter is the perfect example of this statement. Paul is in

chains and in prison – he can only do so much. However, by writing this letter, it has gone unchained for 2,000 years and blessed millions, if not billions. Never, ever, underestimate the power of God’s word, my friends. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us, *“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

We then get into verses 11-13, which offer the three trustworthy sayings: 2:11: *“If we died with him, we will also live with him.”* This speaks to our identity in Christ. We identify with Him being our sin that was nailed to the cross, and we identify with Him as we are given new life in His resurrection.

2:12: *“If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.”* For those who are proponents that you can lose your salvation, this verse is often referenced in support of their position. Peter denied Jesus three times – he disowned his association with God when challenged by a young girl. Yet, the Lord restored him and became a pillar of the early church. Your response might be, ‘Well, that’s Peter – he’s special.’

Fair enough, well, you’re looking at someone who denied the Lord. It was very early on in my faith when I was playing golf with a business prospect. He told the most vile and disgusting jokes that I’ve ever heard. When we didn’t laugh as he expected, he challenged us, “What’s the matter? Are you Christians?” I’m ashamed to tell you I remained silent. Because I’m relaying this story to you – it’s been probably at least 15 years – it should tell you the mark it has left on me. Yet, God has been gracious enough to restore me and allows me to stand up here and teach His Word. An even better end to that story was this man was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer less than 6 months after that golf game, and he accepted Christ before He died.

This verse is meant for the individual who has lived their lives disowning the Lord. There is a point of no return when it comes to disowning Him – He will honor that choice. I believe this verse is not for the occasional failure in standing up when being asked to align one's self with Jesus Christ.

That leads me to verse 13, *"If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself."* We are going to be faithless from time-to-time. We're going to fall prey to the enemy and be weak. Thank God, He is always faithful. We all love to proclaim God's faithfulness – especially when He delivers on what we were praying for or He gives something that is so obviously to our benefit. Maybe it's a child or grandchild we've been praying for. Maybe it's a job because we've been out of work for a long time. It's very easy to shout from the mountaintop how God is so faithful when we get what we want.

How about those times when things aren't going well? When we're in the middle of a storm – the winds of trouble are howling, the waves of fear and dread are pounding against our hearts – are we proclaiming God's faithfulness then? Or are we crying out for God to rescue us? And what if he doesn't come to the rescue? The sick aren't healed, or the finances are worse. Is God still faithful? I looked up the word faithful in the book of Job – can't find it once. Because we know the end of Job's story, we can say God was faithful. However, until God did restore His life, do you hear Job mentioning God's faithfulness? Nope.

We equate God's faithfulness with good things, with blatantly obvious blessings. So is God still faithful when things aren't going well? If He's not being our deliverer and protector, is He being less faithful than when things are going hunky dory? This contrasting of our circumstances presents a key foundational question each of us need to seriously address in our relationship with God. What

does it mean when the Scriptures tell us God is faithful? Maybe the more important question is to Whom is God faithful?

The answer to that is first and foremost found in verse 13 – ***Himself***. God has a plan – He has lots of plans that roll up into one great big plan for humanity. He has a plan for each of us as individuals, and He has a plan for the body of Christ. His faithfulness to that plan is unwavering – He cannot deny His faithfulness to His plans. 1 Thessalonians 5:24 states, “*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*” Do what? Accomplish His plan – because He is faithful to Himself.

So how does God being faithful to Himself translate to us? By having to rely on His faithfulness to Himself, we can find rest and peace that we are direct beneficiaries of His faithfulness to Himself – even when we are not faithful to Him. In other words, since He is love and is good and therefore what He does is rooted in love and goodness, the plans He has for us are based on these core character traits. We need to remember Philippians 1:6: “*that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” God can say He will complete the good work in each of us not because of His faithfulness to us (which He does have), but first because the faithfulness He has to ***Himself***.

The final section of our reading deals with Paul’s warnings of the perils of false teaching. Interestingly, there’s a progression in the escalation of this issue. It starts with people who bring quarreling words. People get so hung up on unimportant things in Scripture. ‘*Was Malchizidek Jesus?*’ ‘*If Abraham was such a man of faith, why did he wait so long before doing what God asked him to do? Oh, and by the way, he was told not to bring family, but he did anyway! What do you have to say about that Mr. Bible Answer-Man??*’ There are, sadly, just some people who just want to stir the pot – they don’t want answers – they want to cause

problems to get attention. Paul tells Timothy what they're offering is of no value and rightly says that these people ruin the truth to others who listen to them.

The next thing to avoid is godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. By godless chatter, we're moving away from unimportant questions about the Bible to now a fascination with the secular world. Almost invariably this kind of chatter ends up in judgment, criticism, and condemnation – none of which should be found coming out of the mouths of people walking with Christ. Paul wisely warns of the perils of hanging out with these people – their chatter is contagious, and it tears down the saint. Paul likens their teachings like gangrene spreading. I'll spare you from showing a slide of gangrene – trust me, it isn't pretty – and neither is godless chatter. The root of godless chatter is a departure from the truth. This particular group was claiming that the resurrection – or the second coming – had already taken place.

Paul, probably recognizing he's laying on the warnings pretty thick, gives Timothy this gem in verse 19, *“Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”* Isn't it wonderful to read *“The Lord knows those who are his”*? The enemy will relentlessly cast seeds of doubt and shame on us, and we may start to believe it. We need to hear that the Lord knows those who are His, don't we?

In verse 20, Paul provides some imagery of the typical church – *“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use.”* There are people in church that are there because they want to grow with God, develop Christian fellowship, and work for the Kingdom of God. These are the articles of gold and silver. The articles of wood and clay are those members that are people who are there with no interest in developing a relationship with God and are there for the

social aspects – nothing spiritual. So what do you do with these people? Jesus commands us to love our friends and enemies, yet Paul is telling us in the next verse that those who separate themselves from the “wood and the clay” will be considered “*instruments for special purposes, made holy and useful to the Master.*” Do we have a contradiction here between Jesus and Paul? No – I’ll get to this in just a couple of minutes.

Paul commands Timothy, and us, in verses 22 & 23, “*Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.*” I think of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife when I read this verse. What did he do when she seduced him? – He literally ran away from her. Now, because she was a low-end character, she ended up lying about what happened to Potiphar and Joseph found himself in jail wrongfully accused. The point Paul is making is if you’re going to want a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ, you’re going to have to grow up and make some choices about **what** you will allow yourself to do and then draw a line in the sand that you **won’t** cross about what you won’t do.

You might ask, “How will I know what is ok and what isn’t?” Firstly, I believe, if we’re listening, the Holy Spirit will convict us if He feels what we’re exposing ourselves to is dangerous. Another good question to ask if you’re not sure if an activity is a good idea is to ask yourself is if it edifies, or benefits your relationship with the Lord. Are you going to go to hell, lose your salvation, or make the Lord angry if you go to that R-rated movie or watch that reality show? Of course not, but what is it doing to your relationship with God? Another way to evaluate an activity is would you be comfortable doing it with Jesus in your presence? I’m not trying to put a guilt trip on anyone, but these are legitimate

challenges each of us face as we consider how deep of a relationship with God we want to pursue.

Paul also tells us to avoid foolish and stupid arguments because they produce quarrels. I've already touched on this earlier, but being a Christian doesn't mean we're to be doormats and let anyone just babble on about unimportant things. Our time is valuable, and it is ok to set up healthy and loving boundaries that shield us from getting caught in the web of people who are seeking to waste our time.

And this is the segue to the final three verses of chapter 2, "*And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*"

I just posed the possibility of a contradiction between Jesus' command to love others as we love ourselves and Paul's command to separate ourselves from "problem people", or, as he calls them in verse 24, "*opponents*". These verses clearly tell us that we're to make an effort to be kind to everyone and gently instruct them in the truth. The hope is God will work on their hearts in hopes that they'll repent. Moreover, we must be careful of our pride overruling our obligation to come along side people. Sadly, it's very easy to form "spiritual cliques" in the Body of Christ – where people who think they're more spiritual than others and end up separating themselves from the alleged "non-spiritual" people. There's a name for people in these spiritual cliques – they're called **Pharisees**. A church is the last place on earth people should find these unloving, uncaring, and non-compassionate groups. These were the lone people in the Gospels that Jesus had a major problem with, so we need to do whatever we can to love on "the articles of wood and clay" in hopes they'll respond to the Lord's desire to turn them into gold

and silver. That's what He did for me, and I'm guessing He did the same for many of you.

There's a key word in the final verse, and that is "*captive*". When Jesus first returned to his hometown of Nazareth after being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he said the following in the synagogue on the Sabbath in Luke 4:18, "*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the **captives** and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.*" There's that word, captive, again. Who are these captives?

Colossians 2:8 tells us, "*See to it that no one takes you **captive** through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*" What does this verse imply regarding people who can be taken captive? It means not only nonbelievers are captives, but also even **believers** can be held captive. This happens through deception. You don't want to hear this, but I can guaranty that each and everyone of you is believing a lie at this very moment. Again, I'm not trying to condemn you or make you feel foolish – my purpose in making this statement is to encourage you to go to the Lord and ask Him what lie or lies you are believing.

I know He will give you an answer in time because, as we saw in Luke 4:18, it is His mission to proclaim liberty to the captives. How does He provide that liberty? – By being the Truth. Jesus **is** the Truth. There **is** absolute truth, and Jesus is the embodiment of it. He knows better than anyone the pain that comes from deception, which leads to sin and captivity. God sent His Son to reveal on a personal level to each of us the need to know and live in truth. Jesus said in John 8:32, "*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Praise God

He loves us enough to show and tell us the truth, so we don't have to be captives any longer.

The title to today's message was "Advice to a Minister". The Apostle Paul gives loving and protective guidance to his young protégé, Timothy. As I was preparing this message, I felt a burden for the pastoral staff here at Eastside. These people are on the front lines of the battle for people's souls, and they get beat up a lot. Satan has special hatred for those who are called to be pastors, and he will use every deception and attack plan he can to derail these people from proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ. I asked Jim and Jeff Swaney to go to the pastoral staff and develop a list of prayer requests for them and their families. There are copies of these prayer requests on each of the tables, and I'm asking that each of you take one and commit to praying for these servants of God. Remember what we heard about prayer earlier, "*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*" So let's do that now.