

Loyalty To The Risen Christ.

Text: 2 Tim 2:1-13

1) What Such Loyalty Involves

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Encouragement That Is Given To Be Loyal

765, 208, 260, 286, 352

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Timothy 2:1-13, ¹ *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* ² *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* ³ *You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* ⁴ *No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

⁵ *And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.* ⁶ *The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.* ⁷ *Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

⁸ *Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,* ⁹ *for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.*

¹⁰ *Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.* ¹¹ *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.* ¹² *If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.* ¹³ *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Last Sunday we commemorated the glorious resurrection of our Saviour. It was a great victory which the Lord gained for us over sin, Satan, death, and hell after the fierce conflict waged for our redemption and salvation. We rejoice over that victory.

Because of this victory Jesus is called in Hebrews the *Captain of our Salvation*. But although our enemies have been defeated by the *Captain of our salvation*, and although we through faith in Christ have become partakers of His victory so that His victory is our victory, there is no life of ease in store for a Christian believer, for a Christian's life is constant warfare.

The old enemies still harass and molest us with their temptations, and they place many obstacles in our way. The fight against them is lifelong. It will not cease until we close our eyes in death. In view of such a lifelong struggle many people get tired of the fight and lose heart and quit, thereby becoming disloyal to Christ.

In the first chapter Paul mentions Phygellus and Hermogenes,¹ who were not willing to bear suffering for the cause of Christ, and they became disloyal. Onesiphorus, however, whom Paul praises, is an illustrious example of faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord. In the text Paul exhorts Timothy to faithfulness and loyalty in the service of Christ. So today let us consider *Loyalty to Christ, Our Risen Saviour*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Loyalty To Christ, Our Risen Saviour

What Such Loyalty Involves

Firstly, we must be loyal to God's pure Word. Timothy, whom Paul addresses in this text, was one of the closest friends and a most faithful coworker of Paul. He had been converted to Christianity through the preaching of the Gospel by Paul. Hence the apostle regards him as his spiritual child and affectionately calls him "*my son*."

On one of his missionary journeys Paul left Timothy in charge of the congregation at Ephesus. This position was not only a very responsible one but also very difficult. False teachers threatened the congregation. We know how bitterly the apostle was opposed to all corruption of the Gospel, and how insistent he was upon purity of doctrine.

Since Paul was in prison and entertained no hope of being released and was convinced that the time of his death was at hand, he gave Timothy the instruction "*the things that you have heard from me ... teach others also*." In these words lies the exhortation to Timothy to remain loyal to God's Word, and to preserve the pure doctrine which he had been taught by the apostle.

However, it was not enough for Paul that Timothy himself remain loyal to the Word, he was also concerned that the Gospel be preserved for others and that it be transmitted to others in its truth and purity. Timothy therefore was commanded by Paul to instruct others, trustworthy, reliable men, in the Christian doctrine so that these in turn could go out and teach the unadulterated Word of God.

Again and again in this epistle Paul warns Timothy against false teaching and exhorts him to abide by the truth. From all this we can see how concerned Paul was that the pure doctrine be preserved and that Christian believers adhere to it.

What Paul demands of Timothy is demanded of every Christian believer, for loyalty to Christ, the risen Saviour, means loyalty to His pure Gospel, as Christ clearly states John 8:31-32. ***“If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”***

No one can lay claim to being a Christian, devout and sincere, who is willing to compromise with false teaching, with the corruption of the Word of God, as though it mattered little. God wants us to keep His Word just as pure as He has given it to us.

For this reason we are exhorted in many passages to abide by the pure doctrine of the Word.² Again, in many passages we are warned against false teaching.³ To us, too, then, this exhortation is addressed to be loyal to Christ, the risen Saviour, by remaining loyal to His Word and abiding by the pure doctrine of Scripture.

Not only are we ourselves to abide by it, but ours is also the duty to teach others the true saving doctrine of Scripture. Ours is the solemn duty to preserve it for future generations. We are not to be content that we possess it in all its truth and purity, but we are also to make provision that it be handed down to posterity.

Does this not remind us of the debt of gratitude we owe our forefathers? That we today have the true doctrine is due, next to God’s grace, to their loyalty to Christ and His Word. How thankful to the Lord we ought to be for this great blessing!

And how conscientiously we ought to follow their footsteps in remaining loyal to Christ by remaining loyal to His pure Gospel! Let us hand down to our

children and children's children the sacred Word of God just as pure as we received it from our fathers.

That this exhortation is timely goes without saying. Around us we see spiritual decay and corruption, indifference, laxity, and even outspoken enmity against the Scriptures.

Truly, we have reason to plead with God:⁴

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide;
Nor let Thy Word, that heavenly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.

In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, O Lord, true steadfastness,
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and sacrament.

Secondly, Loyalty to Christ includes also willingness to endure hardship. Our text exhorts us ³ ***You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*** Timothy was a soldier in the army of Christ, fighting for the cause of Christ against bitter enemies. In such service he was to be loyal, and this included willingness to bear sufferings for His Saviour without murmuring.

As the life of a soldier is often connected with fatigue, burdens, being deprived, hunger, thirst, dangers, and wounds, so Timothy had to expect sufferings as a good soldier of Christ. Paul exhorts Timothy to endure such sufferings patiently.

Others were unwilling to suffer for Christ's sake, but Timothy was to prove his loyalty by patient suffering for Christ's sake.

Every soldier in the army of Christ — and every Christian believer is a soldier in Christ's army — is exhorted to be loyal to Christ by enduring sufferings for His sake willingly and patiently. A soldier of Christ has many difficulties to face and many hardships to endure. Remember that the enemies are cunning and powerful.⁵

Every Christian knows this from experience. What a terrible battle a believer must often wage to overcome a temptation to sin! How hard a struggle

in order to abstain from what God forbids! How severe is often the fight against his own flesh in denying himself, crucifying the desires of his evil heart, and doing the will of the Saviour!

Again, suffering for Christ means that the Christian must bear slander and mockery, perhaps suffering the loss of a job or good position, financial loss, and even persecution. But a true loyal soldier of Christ will be willing to endure all this for the Saviour without murmur and complaint. He knows that his Christian calling requires this. Therefore he is not bewildered by these sufferings as though some strange thing happened to him, but patiently endures such hardness as a good soldier of Christ.

Thirdly, Loyalty to Christ includes pleasing Him, who has chosen us. Our text says, *'No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.* The Roman soldier, through strict and faithful performance of his duties, strove to please the commander and therefore did not entangle himself in the affairs of the civilian world, so that he would pay strict attention to his business as a soldier.

Thus Timothy was exhorted by Paul to be loyal to Christ and to attend strictly to his duties as a soldier of Christ, to give his full attention to the cause of Christ, in order to please his Master and Saviour.

We, too, should show our loyalty to the risen Lord by paying strict attention to our Christian calling. Christ, our Lord, has chosen us as His own in order that we should serve Him. Our aim must always be to please Him.

To this end we must not allow our attention to be detracted from our Christian calling by the things of this world. If we do, we shall become disloyal. Remember Judas. Our Christian calling is our highest calling, and it must receive our chief consideration and greatest interest, as Christ says, *"Seek first the kingdom of God."*⁶ The things of this world must not hinder us in our Christian calling. We must not try to serve God and Mammon. Our salvation, our service to Christ, must never be regarded by us as a secondary matter.

Only when we are sincere, upright, faithful, in all things of our Christian calling, shall we please Christ and thus prove our loyalty to Him.

Fourthly, Loyalty to Christ includes compliance with the rules of God's Word. ⁵ *And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he*

competes according to the rules. The athletes in the ancient Greek contests, to which Paul refers, strove to win the laurel wreath and the honour of victory; but the prize was given only when the winner had complied with all the rules both as to training and as to conduct in the contest.

If the competitor had not complied with the rules, he could not lay claim to the honour of being crowned. Paul exhorts Timothy to comply with the rules of God's Word in his calling. God's rules were to be his sole standard, his guide.

This exhortation also applies to us. How can any one say that he is loyal to Christ his risen Saviour if he does not strive to live according to the will of his Saviour?

What the will of the Lord is, what rules should govern our thoughts, words, deeds, our whole life, God has laid down in His sacred Word. We know the Ten Commandments of God, and these must always be our standard and guide. Not the opinions and wishes of men, not our own ideas, but God's rules must determine our course. Here Paul says the same thing that Mary told the servants at Cana, "***Whatever He says to you, do it.***"⁷

Nominal Christians ignore the rules of God's Word and live according to their own desires, just as they please. Certainly such conduct is disloyalty to Christ who has bought them with a price. Only when we can truthfully say with the psalmist, ⁴⁷ ***And I will delight myself in Your commandments, Which I love***⁸ do we prove that we are loyal to Christ.

Fifthly, Loyalty to Christ includes diligent labour for Christ. Paul writes to Timothy, ⁶ ***The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.*** A farmer must work, work persistently, exert himself, if he wishes to gather the fruits of his field. If he does so, he will be the first to enjoy such fruits. If he does not, he will not reap any harvest.

Likewise, Timothy was to labour diligently in the service of Christ and not "*take things easy.*" By such faithful work he would gain souls for Christ. God would bless his labours, and Timothy's heart would rejoice over the results of his labour.

We, too, have been called into the kingdom of God in order to work. Our Saviour has chosen us and called us into His service, and Christ expects that we work for Him diligently and whole-heartedly.

A lazy servant is not faithful to his master. So a lazy Christian is not faithful and loyal to his Lord. Loyalty to Christ means that we work for Him with our whole heart. For a loyal Christian there is never too much to be done for the Lord.

He goes to the limit of his ability in spreading the Gospel of Christ, in supporting His kingdom. He never grumbles that he is asked to do too much for his risen Saviour; indeed, he is sorry that he cannot do more.

Thus, loyalty to Christ includes all these things. And these are all weighty matters, of great importance. Therefore Paul commends them to Timothy for further consideration, ⁷ *Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

May we, too, prayerfully ponder them and apply them to ourselves. Remember, however, that it is God who gives the right understanding. Let us pray to God for light, knowledge, and understanding so that it is not only clear to us what loyalty to Christ, our risen Saviour includes, but that we also put this into practise in our lives.

2. Loyalty To Christ, Our Risen Saviour The Encouragement That Is Given To Be Loyal

Paul knows that it is true here also that “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*”⁹ and hence he encourages us to be loyal. So what does encourage us to be loyal?

Firstly, The resurrection of Christ will help you to remain loyal. Paul says, ⁸ *Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.* Christ is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. Always remember that Christ, true man but also true God, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification.

Remember what His glorious resurrection means to us: that He is the Son of God, that His doctrine is true, and that we are truly redeemed. That is the sum and substance of the Gospel as Paul preached it and as we believe it. Always remember that your Saviour lives and what this means to you.

If you always remember this you will be loyal to Christ. You will adhere to the truth of Scripture; you will adhere to the Saviour in faith; you will be willing

to endure hardship as a soldier of Christ, and you will strive to please your Saviour in all things.

You will also work for Him. You will serve Him, with heart, mind, soul, and life, who has done so much for you. If you are ever tempted to become disloyal, remember the resurrection of Christ and what an important meaning this has for you, and you will gain strength to remain loyal to your risen Saviour.

Secondly, The grace of God in Christ will help you to remain loyal. ¹ ***You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*** If we had to depend upon our own strength to remain loyal to Christ, we would fail. Strength is given to us from above.

God gives us His grace, unmerited grace in Christ, which enables us to fight victoriously against all our enemies, to endure hardship and suffering, and to keep the faith. Call upon Him in sincere prayer for grace in suffering for Christ, for grace in working for Christ, for grace in remaining loyal to Christ. Such prayer will be answered, as He once said to Paul, ***“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”***¹⁰

Thirdly, the example of Paul will help you to remain loyal. Paul says in our text, ***for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.*** ¹⁰ ***Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.***

Think of the tireless work of Paul for Christ and His Gospel. He laboured more than all the others in preaching the Gospel of the crucified and risen Saviour. Think of the sufferings Paul endured for Christ’s sake: imprisonment, mockery, and abuse. Even as Paul was writing this epistle, he was in prison.

However, it was a comfort to him to know that, although he was bound, the Word of God was not bound, that the risen Lord would see to it that the Gospel would be preached in spite of the most stubborn opposition.

What a wonderful example Paul gives us in loyalty to Christ in all things! Such an example should encourage us to remain loyal to our Saviour. Remember that Christ is risen, and He, the living Lord, is with us as He was with Paul.

Fourthly, Our glorious hope will help you to remain loyal. Our text says, ¹¹ ***This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.*** If we are loyal to Christ and die with Him, that is, abstain from sin, deny ourselves, crucify our sinful flesh with all evil lusts; if we die to the world with all its sins and sordid pleasures, we shall most certainly live with Christ, who will give us the crown of life.¹¹ That is the great promise of our risen Saviour, whose word is sure. What a strong motive this is to be and remain loyal to Christ!

Our text continues, ¹² ***If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.***” If we willingly and patiently suffer for Christ’s sake, He will bestow honour and glory upon us, make us kings and rulers in heaven. A glorious promise indeed!

As a warning Paul adds, ***If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*** ¹³ ***If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*** This also is the sure word of God, on which we can rely, that if we deny Christ, if we show by word or deed that we are ashamed of Him, if we become disloyal, Christ will not acknowledge us as His own, but will deny and disown us on the day of Judgment.

Let us not think that the Lord will not do this. Christ will remain faithful; He will not become untrue to Himself; He will keep His word and carry out His threat of punishment. Just as He will graciously bless the loyal, so He will justly punish the disloyal.¹² What a solemn warning against disloyalty and what a strong motive to remain loyal!

Our Saviour has paid a great price for our redemption and salvation; we are His own in life and death. May God grant us grace to remain loyal to Him in all conditions and circumstances. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Tim 1:15

² Titus 2:7; Matt. 28:20; Mal. 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:16

³ Matt. 16:12; 7:15; Heb. 13:9

⁴ Hymn 260

⁵ Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; John 8:44

⁶ Matthew 6:33

⁷ John 2:5

⁸ Psalm 119:47

⁹ Matthew 26:41

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:9

¹¹ John 11:25, 26; 2 Tim. 2:10; Rev. 2:10

¹² Matt. 7:23; 10:33