

2 Timothy 2:8-10

Instructions to Timothy
Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



For the Sake of the Elect



Paul is ID-ing the **gospel** to Timothy. It is like, after all he has instructed Timothy, (in two letters), about this complicated entity that we call “pastoral ministry”, he now wants to take him back to the basics – the most basic, foundational elements of Christianity and Christian leadership. It is the gospel – those events which began before creation and which stretch to the end of this world, but which deal **especially** with the conception of Jesus and run through His death, resurrection, and ascension! Those historical events definitively encapsulate what the gospel is! They are the beginning truths! Paul says “remember” - and I think **we** have to always be saying that to each other – **remember** who you are, and **why** you are what you are! Remember **Jesus** – the author and perfecter of our faith! Remember that **He** fit the description of the Old Testament prophets, including that of being of the line of David. Now there were contentious disputes in the early church about the exact genealogy of Jesus, and even the gospels of Matthew and Luke contain different genealogies. Some theologians say that Matthew’s genealogy is the family lineage of Joseph, as the author’s perspective comes at the birth of Jesus from Joseph’s perspective and Luke comes at the birth of Jesus from Mary’s perspective, but, they both clearly seem to be following Joseph’s genealogy, even though the writers knew Joseph was **not** the genetic father of Jesus! Still, in Jewish society of that time, official genealogies were always compiled on the father’s side of the family. Which ever genealogy was correct, or if both were somehow correct, what we do know is that for the census, Joseph and Mary went to the city of their family origin, which, of course, was Bethlehem, the City of David. This is where David and his family originated, so Joseph had some kind of proof that he should report to that small town where most people were related in some way to David’s family tree! We are not really told how Mary was genetically connected, and the importance of her connection to David’s family tree doesn’t seem to occur to the disciples and early Christians. But it had to have occurred to them, especially since Joseph had nothing to do with the conception of Jesus. They all were convinced that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus, and that He was a miraculous product of the Holy Spirit who manipulated the DNA of Mary to combine with the DNA of God! It is mind-blowing – but we are dealing with the God of Creation! He could have done creation a trillion different ways! With the formation of, specifically, Jesus, it had to happen this way! We saw earlier that He was chosen before creation for this! And still, the early Christians seemed preoccupied with arguing over Joseph’s genealogy! [1 Tim. 1:3b-5]

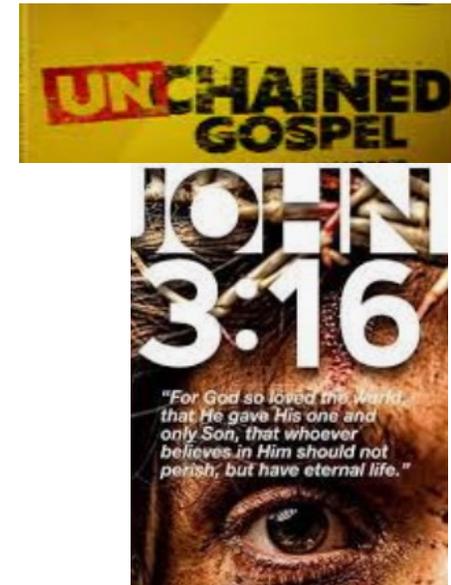
Matthew and Luke

Matthew 1:2-16			Luke 3:23-38		
Abraham	Sothmon	Jechoniah	God	Abraham	Nathan
Isaac	Yifobahim	Sheafel	Adam	Isaac	Matthia
Jacob	Abijah	Zerubbabel	Seth	Jacob	Nerwa
Judah	Joseph	Abiad	Ezekiel	Jakob	Meley
Rezer	Schabaphat	Abiad	Caanan	Pharez	Elakim
Hanna	Joram	Assa	Mahataiel	Hizron	Josiah
Reem	Uzziah	Zadok	Jered	Adm	Joseph
Amramadah	Jotham	Achim	Erech	Adm	Judah
Nahshon	Abaz	Eliad	Methaselah	Amramadah	Simeon
Salomon	Hezekiah	Eliasa	Lameck	Nahshon	Levi
Boaz	Manasch	Mathan	Neah	Salomon	Matthai
Obad	Arnos	Jacob	Sheen	Joram	Joram
Jesse	Josiah	Joseph	Apfanaal	Obad	Eliere
David	Jechoniah	Joram	Caanan	Josef	Jakob
			Sheik	Damid	Er
			Eber	Eliadim	Costas
			Pekg	Addi	Melch
			Roa	Serag	Melch
			Nabac	Nat	Shackiel
			Jesh	Zerubbabel	Josiah

Paul knows of, I think, of the very human tendency to get distracted, to go off on rabbit trails – anything to keep our focus off target – to break our concentration – and get us to expend our energies fruitlessly - that get us off track and hopelessly lost. I swear I have met a hundred men and women over the years that have been obsessed with one or two points of doctrinal/theological contention, and they are all insufferable! Not a one is reasonable. They are concentrating their considerable energies where there is no payoff for the Kingdom of God – like some early Christians were fixated on the genealogies in Paul’s day! There are thousands of little groups that have convinced themselves that they are right – perhaps the **only ones** right - and there can be no mistake - especially on their particular hobby horse! But inevitably they are focusing on minutia and forgetting about the big basics of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They’ve lost their way. *One time, as a young man, I was leading a group of teens up in the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness area in upper Michigan. We had a hike of about 17 or 18 miles to look forward to – 10 one day, and 7 or 8 the next,.. except for the fact that we got off trail! I basically led them on what I thought should be a shortcut to another part of the trail. It turned out that after a few miles, we couldn’t find the original trail, and with 40 – 50 pound packs on our backs, it was too far to turn around and go back! So,.. we consulted the topographical map and our compasses, and headed out across country – no trail. And then, on top of everything, it started a pouring rain! Now, none of us had ever been there before so, I suppose, we could have made an aggravating situation into a devastating one by striking out without a trail. But after about 5 extra, exhausting, water-logged miles, we finally reached the paved road that we drove in on. It was where we thought it should be according to our rain-soaked paper map. But then it was another 2 or 3 miles down that road to get back to our vehicles! If I had just kept to the main trail, we would have been fine. But we didn’t, and it was a lot of extra miles for us slogging through the country side, exhausted and with the unnerving feeling that we were totally lost! One thing I have learned over the years, is that theological craziness is a subconscious shortcut for Christians that perhaps began well, but decided at some point, either consciously or subconsciously, that being under the control of the Spirit of God was either impossible for them, or it is not what they wanted! They deemed it too hard to completely give over their will to Jesus! But they still wanted the hope of heaven! So tis is how it usually happens - someone who shares the same inclinations as they have, approaches them, and they get to talking, and they find out they are both “Christians”, and the person shared with them some aberrant theological perspective, and the first person adopts that view and becomes a big proponent of it! Suddenly, that is all they want to talk about and debate with other Christians! But, at its most basic level, it’s a shortcut for actually following Jesus! It can be identified by the attitude of superiority, of condescension, a contentious spirit, and a break in fellowship with those that disagree!



Stay with the basics, says Paul! Persevere in giving your will over to what you know is the will Jesus for your life and your behavior! Become more like Him, not more like you! Give up the belligerent attitude of “*I can’t change – this is just me – please don’t try to change me*” – simply because it turns out to be hard to incorporate the fruit of the Spirit – “**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**” into practical living! Listen - Don’t give up! The prize goes to those who stick with it, despite repeated failure! The great theme of Revelations 2, and 3 is to **persist!** Don’t despair! Humble yourself – confess – confess **repeatedly** – everyday if you are failing. But don’t go off trail to dwell on lesser things! Stay the course! It will come - you’ll get it - if you want it!



In **vs. 9**, Paul says that although **he** is in chains, no one can chain God’s word! As long as we stay on track and tell people about Him and what He’s done in our own life, the gospel continues to do its intended work of bringing people to Jesus! Stick with that mission! As long as we are free to speak, and even when we aren’t, **continue** speaking the truth of the gospel and let it do its great work!

That is the context for this next verse – **vs. 10**. “**Endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus...**”. The term “**elect**” means “**chosen**” in the original language and the 2 words are basically interchangeable in translation. The translators could put either word in the English translation. In this instance they chose “**elect**”. But both terms are completely intertwined with the question “*What does that mean – and why?*” - why are we chosen? Are we chosen for salvation? Well, yes we are – once we give our heart to Jesus – **[Eph. 1:13]**. But actually more to the point is that we are chosen for a task. Israel was God’s “**chosen people**” but ultimately only a small percentage of them, over the millenniums, were actually devoted to God and “**saved**” unto Him. Yet they were **all** still God’s “**chosen**”, whether saved unto Him, or not! I believe that the term “**chosen**” has much more to do with being set apart for a **purpose**, a **task**, a **role** that God has for His people to do! This has always been very much a part of the plan of God – to set aside a people of belief, a people of faith for Himself, and to use them to inform/persuade, the unbelieving world that He is Creator/God and that they have been given an offer by Him to be **salvaged, spared, saved!** Before Israel was really an established nation - a substantial entity - God did it Himself – He carefully spread *His own Name* and reputation. To a world steeped in deceit, theft, and bloodshed, He established that He was far bigger and smarter than humanity! He did this with with great demonstrations of power **[Josh. 4:23b,24]!** But after that, once Israel was established, God primarily used people - people spreading the word - as Israel and her prophets became the tool of God to bring salvation to the world. The prophets wrote down the scriptures as they were compelled by the Holy Spirit, and the people read the scriptures, memorized it, and regurgitated it – teaching it to those that did not know it, so that they too could come to know their Creator **[Isaiah 49:6b]**

This was all according to the pre-conceived plan of God! But there was more, ***much more!*** ~Later, there was the incarnation of God's Son – the Chosen One/the Promised One/the Messiah/the Christ – where the Word of God, 2nd member of God Tri-unity/Trinity, became human, but without giving up his God-ness/His deity. Having become human, He then ***gave His life*** for the remission of human sins! And ***then***, after the Chosen One's resurrection, the church was formed and organized, with His eyewitness disciples at its helm! From its very inception, this "church" was the "elect"/or "chosen" vehicle which God intended to use to inform the world about Himself and to present His incredibly generous offer to a guilty, sin-soaked world – an offer for the remission of sins - for the reconciliation of that terrible estrangement between God and humanity! This is what God "chose" for his "elect" to do! It was his intended plan of action from the beginning! It is the gospel!



So Paul's message to young Timothy is this. *"Do not be afraid! This gospel is way bigger than you or me! And the gospel is ***unchained***" and going forward with or without you – but hopefully with you! Do not get sidetracked or lose your focus. As a church leader, you will be a good example, or a bad example, or maybe, as a human being, even some of both! But your church will be looking to your lead for courage and focus.*

I have watched my father die with courage and faith, and now, recently, my mother. Death is usually painful, and usually ugly - humiliatingly so. It reduces you to abject weakness – to *nothing*** of your former glory! I watched my mother fading away, fading to black, as they say, for about 2 ½ weeks. She knew it was happening, and she showed me how to die without fear – with courage – and with faith. Her death is still a raw wound in my mind right now, but, having watched her deal with her own death process, I think that I am better equipped to die with courage and fortitude when it is my time because of what I witnessed in her – or at least I sure hope so.*

It is the same with leadership in the church, and actually with all of us. We show the way to each other – how to live with purpose – how to live in the truth – and how to deal with our increasing limitations - with grace and good-humored acceptance, and from one thing to the next – in all of life. We need examples, my friend - people going before and showing the way. Just be aware of the bigger picture. It's not just you. It's the affect you have on others! Always take that into consideration before you speak or act. You show the way for the rest of us to do it, or you show the way ***not*** to do it! Which₅ one of those do you want to represent?! Paul invites Timothy to represent Christ faithfully, consistently!