

THEME: I've been chosen for a reason to serve in this season!
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OPENING REMARKS:

A number of years back an experiment was done by psychologist Jonathan Haidt. He came up with a fascinating hypothetical exercise, which went something like this:

Participants were handed a summary of a person's life and asked to read it over. Participants were then asked to imagine that the person was their daughter. This is her tragic and unavoidable life story. She hasn't been born yet, but she will be soon, and this is where her life is headed. Participants then had five minutes to edit her story. Eraser in hand, they could eliminate whatever they wanted out of her life. The question for participants was: *What do you erase first?*

Most of us would instinctively and frantically begin to erase the learning disability, the car accident, and the financial challenges. We love our children and would want them to live a life without those hardships, pains, and setbacks. We would all prefer our children's lives be free from pain and anguish.

But ask yourself: *Is that really what's best?*

Do we really think a privileged life of smooth sailing is going to make our kids happy? What if you erase a difficult circumstance that will wake them up to the power of Christ-centered prayer? What if you erase a hardship that's going to show them how to be joyful in spite of any adversity? What if you erase some pain and suffering that ends up being the very thing God uses in their life to cause

them to cry out to Him and embrace Him as Lord? What if you erase a difficult circumstance that wakes them up to God's very purpose for their lives?

It may sound harsh to say, but the number one contributor to spiritual growth for the Christian is not church attendance, listening to sermons, singing worship songs, or being involved in small groups; the number one contributor to spiritual growth is enduring adversity day after day. Being conformed to the image of Christ is born out of daily suffering, setbacks, and challenges of life, and then persevering through it all to the very end!

Early in the 20th century a London newspaper carried an advertisement that read: "*Men wanted for hazardous darkness, and constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.*" The ad, signed by famous Arctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, brought inquiries from thousands of men.

It reminds me that people often respond positively to the plainest of truths!

If Jesus Christ had advertised for disciples, I wonder if the announcement might have read something like this:

Men and women wanted for a seemingly impossible task of helping to build My church. You will often be laughed at, mistreated, misunderstood, and usually by those working alongside you. You will face constant attack from both an invisible enemy and a spiteful world. Most will be imprisoned or persecuted non-stop, and millions will be martyred. You may not see the results of your labor in this life, and your full reward will not come till after your work is completed and you die.

READ: **2 Timothy 2:8-13**

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and* with *it* eternal glory. 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

MAIN POINTS:

- I. **Remember - (vs.8)**
 - II. **Suffer - (vs.9)**
 - III. **Serve - (vs.10)**
 - IV. **Recite - (vs.11-13)**
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I. REMEMBER - (vs.8)

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,

A. "Remember Jesus Christ" -

- Present-tense command; imperative mood

B. "risen from the dead" -

- (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 "*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*")

C. "descendant of David" -

- 100% man, as well as 100% God

D. "according to my gospel" -

- The divinely revealed message of Jesus Christ entrusted to him and that he proclaimed as "*an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God*" (2 Timothy 1:1)

II. SUFFER - (vs.9)

9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

A. "suffer hardship" -

- Living for God is hard work, and sometimes it hurts.

B. "imprisonment as a criminal" -

- Not a criminal, but treated as one.

C. "the word of God is not imprisoned" -

- Scripture is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword!
- The people of God may get imprisoned but the Word of God will never be!

III. SERVE - (vs.10)

10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and with it* eternal glory.

A. "For this reason I endure all things" -

- He ministered to earthly nonbelievers with Heaven's glory in mind.

B. "for the sake of those who are chosen" -

- Not speaking here of fellow believers (see next part), but of God's elect who had yet to believe in Jesus.
- (1 Peter 1:1-2) "*To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood*"

C. "so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus" -

- We are to minister to unbelievers in the hope that God will save them!

D. "eternal glory" -

- This is beyond our feeble comprehension or imagination.

IV. RECITE - (vs.11-13)

11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- A. "trustworthy statement" -
- Probably a creed or hymn that was sung.
- B. "if we died with Him, we will also live with Him" - POSITIVE
- C. "If we endure, we will also reign with Him" - POSITIVE
- D. "If we deny Him, He will also deny us" - NEGATIVE
- E. "If we are faithless, He remain faithful" - NEGATIVE
- F. "He cannot deny Himself" - POSITIVE

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POINTS OF APPLICATION:

- 1. A fruitful Christian is someone who constantly remembers Jesus Christ.**
(QUESTION: When was the last time you "really" thought about Jesus?)
- 2. When Paul taught the gospel, he never held back important parts.**
(And neither should we!)
- 3. Whether free or imprisoned or simply going through a hard time in life, we must be actively spreading the word of God to nonbelievers.**
(Paul was imprisoned for the gospel and still ministered. So should we.)
- 4. The more you serve others the more you'll be afflicted. Accept it and get over it! It is what it is.**
(Ministry isn't always easy or fun or safe, but it is your calling.)
- 5. People who are elect choose God because they were first chosen by God before the foundation of the world.**
(John 6:37 "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.")
- 6. Heaven is real and you will be going there soon enough. Let that truth both energize and sustain you for ministry until that day!**
(QUESTION: If you knew, for example, that you would be going to heaven in exactly 32 months from now...would that knowledge cause you to live any differently today? I'm sure it would.)
- 7. Memorizing key passages of Scripture will keep you both rooted in truth and your theology sound.**
(Form an accountability group with other believers and memorize the word of God together. —> SERMON ON THE MOUNT?)