5 Faithful Sayings - September 27, 2023

**1 Corinthians 1:2** “ **For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified**.”

The Apostle Paul was an extraordinary man. He was born like all writers of the New Testament, Hebrew. He was, as Acts 23 says, a Pharisee son of Pharisees. He was a very knowledgeable man. Most people when they look at the bible might say that it was written by ignorant men. It was written by people who had no other explanation of things that happen in this world but attribute it to a higher power. Paul was definitely not this. He was a very well educated, smart, and as stated above knowledgeable man. He spoke no less than 3 languages, knew every part of the Levitical law, knew how to write in at least 3 languages, and knew the cultures and customs of those nations around him. He knew history and most importantly He knew Jesus Christ and learned from Christ Himself.

It goes to tell that when Paul says things like “This is a faithful saying” one would pay attention, as he did not mince words, nor did he mispeak when it came to the scriptures. He was very precise in his letters and very precise in his testimony of Christ. You can tell a lot about a person by the way they write their letters. For instance, whenever you get a text or for those of us who have ever gotten letters written to us, you can tell the approximate education of the person writing. Do they use proper punctuation, are all the i’s dotted and t’s crossed? Paul was one of those people and his various letters in the New Testament account for this.

Last sermon I preached, I spoke about the 5 faithful sayings of Paul. Paul wrote sayings that made it into the canon of scripture for a reason. When God inspired him to write these they give us tidbits of wisdom that will help us in our day to day lives. He wrote most of these sayings to Timothy as Timothy was a disciple of his. He was training him to be a pastor of a church and to set up leadership in those churches. He also wrote one to Titus, another disciple of Paul’s for the same reason. We will look at each of these faithful sayings and delve into them to understand why they are a part of scripture and how we properly use them.

The first faithful saying is in 1 Timothy 1:15. It states “**The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost (chief).**” Paul was of course not the worst person to ever have graced this world. He would not even be in consideration if someone were to put together a list of the worst people in this world, but Paul called himself the worst of the worst, why? How many of us in this room right now feel like this? I certainly do most of the time to be honest. I know what Christ has done for me. I know that I am supposed to live a holy life. I know that I am not supposed to sin, but I still do willingly anyway at times. The world does not live by our same rules. They do not feel that they are the worst. That is why they will often think God will judge them or grade them on a curve. They do not realize that Christ is the mark they have to make and none of us make it.

Paul wrote in Romans 7, “**Why do I do the things I hate, but not the things I lov**e” (paraphrase). We as Christians strive to do the right thing, to live a holy life, but we cannot. Each time we sin we should feel the full weight of that on us, because a Holy, Just, Unblemished Jesus took on that sin so we did not have to and it should break us. That is why Paul said he was the chief of sinners. He knew what Christ had done for Him and knew that each sin was a stripe on the back of Christ.

The next faithful saying that Paul wrote is found in 1 Timothy 3:1 “**The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.**” and then He goes on after in verses 2-7 to say the qualifications for such a person who is seeking to be an overseer/Bishop/Pastor. Matthew Henry in his commentary wrote “If a man desired the pastoral office, and from love to Christ, and the souls of men, was ready to deny himself, and undergo hardships by devoting himself to that service, he sought to be employed in a good work, and his desire should be approved, provided he was qualified for the office.”

The key in this is, qualified, for the office. There are a lot of people who want to be in leadership but do not possess the skills or blessings of God. When Paul wrote that it is noble or honorable to those who want to be in that position, he was assuming that those people were qualified for the pulpit. He also wanted it to be known that it is not an easy task. Just ask any Pastor or elder of the church how easy serving the church is. It is not easy nor is it something that any of us take flippantly, at least here in this church.

The third faithful saying of Paul comes from 1 Timothy 4:8-9 “**for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance**.” This one is obvious. While working out and working on your physical self is important. More important is your eternal soul. Living the life of a Christian is not an easy life. It takes work. Not a work for salvation mind you, but a work to keep on guard of Satan and His allies. We are told in Philippians to “**work out your salvation with fear and trembling**”. It is not something that should be taken lightly. Think of a bodybuilder. How hard do they work to achieve the “perfect” body? Think of the sacrifices they have to make with their lifestyle, their food and their relation to their family. Something has to be given up or even multiple things to achieve what they want.

The same is true for a Christian when working on their spiritual self. It often takes sacrifice. We must spend time with God, we must study the Word of God, we must take time to ourselves to spend with just God to work on ourselves. It takes work. It takes hard work. The sacrifices that a Christian makes for their faith, however, is never failing. There will come a point in time where you cannot work out physically like you used to and your body might fall into disarray, but when it comes to the Spirit it is Christ who keeps it and Christ who as the scripture says “stores up our treasure in heaven”.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 states “**The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have 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**.” This is the fourth faithful statement of Paul in the scriptures and the last one he wrote to Timothy. It is a faithful statement of encouragement. Many of us in this room have had times where we feel down and out, we feel so far away from God that we could not possibly be one of His children. Paul told Timothy to endure for the sake of Christ. He was telling Timothy that our work for the Lord is not in vain, and even when we lose faith, Christ remains faithful. He told Timothy that even though it is bad on this side of glory that one day all things will be made right and we will reign with him. 2 Timothy 2 is a chapter of encouragement not just for those of us who preach and teach but to all of us who are Christians. It is something that we can all look to in dark times to understand that we are not forsake but we are children of the Most High God.

The fight and final saying comes from the book of Titus, chapter 3 verses 4-8. “**But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.”**

Ephesians 2:8-9 states “***For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.****”* The bible is clear that our own works will not save us. Christ did the work because we could not do it. Isaiah 64 says that “our righteous works are like filthy rags”. That does not mean that we should not do good things, it means that it is not us who is doing the work, it is Christ who is working in us that is producing good things. Our whole lives we are told to be a good person. We are told by people who are not Christians that they are good people but the bible is clear in Romans that there is none righteous, no not one. Paul was telling the same things to Titus. He was telling him in this saying that it is all of Christ and none of any of us. We are to devote ourselves to the work of Jesus and to tell people about that work that He did on the cross.

In closing, there are many sayings in this world. There are many true sayings about living in this world, but none of those sayings are as important as the sayings and words we read in the Word of God. The Word of God is the breath of God, it is His thoughts and actions throughout this world. It gives us a glimpse into what is to come for this dead and dying world. It shows us that It is all about Christ from Genesis to Revelation.

Thank You.