

Dear Friends in Christ,

It was a bitterly cold winter night as the young man plodded through the snow to the home of the girl he had been dating for some time. It was the night he was going to ask her to marry him. Being very practical, the young woman replied, "When you have several thousand dollars, I will seriously consider it."

Six months later, the two strolled hand in hand through a park. He stopped, looked deeply into her eyes and asked, "When are we going to get married?" She said, "Well, do you remember my condition? Just how much money have you saved?" He responded, "Exactly seventy-five dollars." She sighed and smiled, "Oh well, I guess that's close enough!"

I found that story in a book of illustrations under the heading of "flexibility". But that isn't a story of flexibility. It's a story of compromise. And I thought, "How often, in their walk with Jesus, are people willing to *compromise* under the guise of *being flexible*."

When it comes to the Word and all it means for life and salvation . . .

THERE IS NO COMPROMISE

I. Remember.

Our text begins: "Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, descended from David." (v. 8a) Why? Because if you forget Jesus you're lost . . . forever.

I have recently read a critique of Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life*. The critique was written by Todd Wilken. You will receive a complete copy of that critique as you leave the service this morning. You'll want to give it a thorough reading since *The Purpose Driven Life* has sadly become the mantra of many Lutheran Churches. And, yes, I do have the book and have read through it. Anyway, in his critique, Wilken writes: "...All you have to do to earn heavenly rewards from God is to do what Jesus did." Then he quotes a piece from page 96 of the book:

Notice that Noah obeyed completely (no instruction was overlooked), and he obeyed exactly (in the way and time God wanted it done). That is wholeheartedness. It is no wonder God smiled on Noah. (Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002, p. 72)

Then Wilken notes, "But wait a minute. Isn't the fact that **I can't obey** God completely, wholeheartedly a problem? Isn't that the reason Jesus lived a perfect life for me, and went to the Cross for me - because **I can't and don't obey** God completely, exactly and wholeheartedly? (And, I might add, neither can Rick Warren). Oh, yes...sin. It's a problem all right."

What is equally important is the footnote to this: "(footnote 25)...Warren ignores the fact that Noah found favor with God before he obeyed. In fact, Scripture clearly commends Noah's faith. Hebrews 11:7 [not his obedience]."

David R. Andersen writes: "Religion, whether medieval or modern, always succeeds in focusing attention on our worthiness and the law. It always triumphs in focusing attention on individual sins and thus ignoring completely the depth of our sinful predicament." (David R. Andersen, *Luther on Galatians, Modern Reformation*, Vol. 12, No. 5, September/October, 2003, p. 26)

And that's why we are to **REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST RAISED FROM THE DEAD!** If our Christian life is based on making God happy with us by the things we do, and earning goodies from God by the things we do, then the only thing we'll experience is a **Misery Driven Life**. It is not, foremost, an issue of what we do for Jesus. It is first and foremost what God has done and continues to do for us

through Christ Jesus. Yes, we respond to that in love and thankfulness. But, even then, our response is pocked and frayed with the sin still in us. Thanks be to God for His unending love for us in Christ. As the Psalmist proclaims, "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord **will never count against him.**" (Ps. 32:1,2; Rom. 4:8)

When it comes to remembering Christ and all that implies there can be no compromise - ever!

II. In Spite of Any Suffering.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. (vs. 8-10)

Well, this is a tough one, isn't it? American Christians will suffer - just so much for so long - for the sake of the Gospel. And we don't like to think about it too much, do we...this bearing the cross that Christ said we must bear? Isn't five or ten years of that long enough? And what about my comfort and conveniences? What about my personal happiness and earthly security?

And for others? Must we really suffer for the sake of others? Do we really need to love other people that much? Is the eternity of others really worth it? Silly questions, huh? But valid, nonetheless - judging by how many fall away. P. E. Kretzmann writes:

The fact that the apostle endured all sufferings so steadfastly should serve for the encouragement of the Christians for all times; it should cause them to become so sure of their salvation in Christ Jesus that even the greatest afflictions and persecutions would not cause them to doubt the fact of their being the children of the heavenly Father through Christ. For their salvation is in Christ Jesus; it is earned by Him, it rests in Him, it is grounded in Him. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the believers will obtain that eternal glory which is connected with this salvation. (P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, New Testament, Vol. II., p. 405)

The streets were lined with crowds, cheering the marching regiments about to leave for overseas. A recruit, who had watched the crowd for some time, asked, "Who are all those people cheering?" A veteran standing next to him replied, "They are the people who are not going."

We're not cheerleaders, brothers and sisters. Because of Christ's love for us we love all people. And we are to be ready and willing to share the forgiveness and eternal life of Christ with all. There is no compromise...in spite of any or all suffering. God help us and give us strength!

III. For "A Trustworthy Saying".

Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
If we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
If we are faithless,
he will remain faithful,
for he cannot disown himself. (vs. 11-13)

I would like to quote Kretzmann one more time:

...If we are faithful to the Lord, even unto death...then we shall also become partakers of the reward of mercy which He has reserved for us in heaven...If we are faithless, if we are not true to Him...if we lose the faith of our hearts by neglecting the Word and Sacraments, God will be faithful to His threat of punishment, for He cannot be untrue to His essence; He is the Eternal, Immutable. (Ibid, pp. 405,406)

Salvation is ours. Though we still struggle with sin and often suffer the consequences of bad decisions, misspent years, words hastily spoken and actions with little thought of outcome, for the sake of Jesus Christ our sin has been taken away. Though we are miserably inconsistent - regardless of how hard we try to be otherwise - for the sake of Jesus Christ God loves us. And that love is generously poured out to us through Word and Sacrament. Salvation is ours. Christ is ours. And because of Christ, we are God's!

And like Paul, we come to terms with our willingness to lovingly present Christ to all regardless of cost. If God, in Christ, would love us so much, we could do no less with others.

Susan B. Anthony remarked, "Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation."

But Christ said it best of all: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16) If God loved the world that much, could we, the recipients of that love, love it less?

There is no compromise.

Amen.

Pastor William K. Abbott

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*II Timothy 2:8-13: **“There Is No Compromise”***

I. Remember.

II. In Spite of Any Suffering.

III. For “A Trustworthy Saying”.

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