



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Sunday, October 9-15 (C) – 2 Timothy 2:8-15

**Focus:** *Endurance*

### **word of life**

**“If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.”** 2 Timothy 2:11-13 (NRSV)

Read 2 Timothy 2:8-15

Our readings continue from the pastoral letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy. It is a letter of encouragement and advice given to a young man (Timothy) – young in the faith – as Timothy faces the challenges of living as a faithful follower of Christ. “Remember Jesus Christ” are the first words of advice given in this section. (See 2 Timothy 2:8)

1. *As you read the verses for today, what words of encouragement or advice do you hear?*
2. *What does it mean to “remember Jesus Christ” when we are young?*

Our reading for today offers a glimpse of the challenges faced by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian community. The author writes of suffering hardship, even being fettered in chains like a criminal. (vs. 9) The church was being persecuted; the faithful were being challenged to deny Christ. (vs. 12b) But even in the midst of trial and persecution, the gospel cannot be contained. “But the word of God is not chained.” (2 Timothy 2:9b NRSV) Imprisoning the messenger cannot imprison the message.

3. *Describe what it would have been like to be a Christian in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.*
4. *What images come to mind when you hear about God’s word not being chained?*

In the midst of challenges, Timothy is called to endure. Earlier in chapter 2, the writer of the letter to Timothy uses three examples of faithful endurance – a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Each example requires determination and preparation. Each calls forth patience. Each involves sacrifice for something greater than self. “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.” (2 Timothy 2:10 NRSV)

As the community of faith experiences suffering, persecution, ostracism and challenges, it is reminded of the call to faithful discipleship – a call first heard in baptism. “If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11-13 NRSV)

5. *How can someone die with Christ, but also live with Christ?*
6. *How does it feel when someone denies knowing us?*
7. *What is the difference between denying Christ and being faithless?*

Many scholars believe that these verses (vs. 11-13) are phrases from an early baptismal hymn. Note the conditional nature of the phrases: “If –Then.” If we persevere in the midst of challenges, then we know the fullness of life with Christ. And even if we stumble and deny our faith, God remains faithful. The expected pattern of the conditional, “if-then” formula – “if we are faithless, then he will also be **faithless**” – is shattered by grace: “if we are faithless, he remains **faithful**”.

8. *What is the significance of Christ being faithful, despite the times when we are faithless?*

Timothy is urged to remind the faith community (vs. 14) of the promised joys that come with faithful endurance, as well as the unexpected grace of God that comes even in the midst of our faithlessness.

## **word among us**

Tim took seriously the pledge he made at the Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) last week. He had listened to the testimony of others as they shared their personal stories of the struggles of staying sober and of falling “off the wagon.” He heard the renewed commitment of those who attended the meeting – a commitment to stay sober, a commitment to support one another. It was a commitment he took for himself.

But it had been a difficult week at work and at home. In the past, Tim had only known one way to deal with the challenges of life. And so Tim went for a walk and found himself standing at the doors of the local tavern. He paused for a moment, then he reached in his pocket to see how much money he had with him. As he reached for the dollar bills and change, he pulled out a piece of paper. It was a note from Tim’s AA sponsor. The note consisted of only three words, but they were meaningful and life-changing for Tim: “Hang in there!”

1. *How you would finish the story about Tim?*
2. *Who has offered words of encouragement or advice to you when you have faced the challenges of living faithfully?*
3. *How can simple words like, “Hang in there!” make such an impact?*

“If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him....” (2 Timothy 2:11-12 NRSV) As we face the challenges and temptations of daily living, we are urged through words of Scripture to “hang in there” – to endure. We are reminded of the hope that is promised to be with us in those times of trial. And we are encouraged and strengthened as we hear once again the amazing grace of a God who is always faithful, even in our times of faithlessness.

Amazing grace. Indeed!

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Live among God’s faithful people**

In our baptism, promises are made. Those who are baptized (or their parents and sponsors) promise to live and grow in their faith through study of the Word of God and involvement in the Christian community. The community, in turn, promises to support the newly baptized through prayer and through involvement in worship and opportunities for the baptized to learn and grow in faith and commitment to Christ.

There are times when those promises seem to be easy to keep. But there are also times when we are not faithful in our baptismal vows. In those times, the words written to Tim and Timothy are words we need to hear: “If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him....” (2 Timothy 2:11-12 NRSV) Hang in there!

4. *Who in your life needs an encouraging word about the faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ?*
5. *How might you encourage others during the coming week?*

### **Prayer**

Guide and direct our days and our deeds, O God. When we are faithful, strengthen us with joy of your presence; and when we are faithless, remind us of your forgiving grace in Christ our Lord. Amen

## ***last word***

Think of someone who is struggling and encourage them to “hang in there!”