

Nearing the end of his life, Paul wrote his last epistle, Second Timothy. In his final words to his beloved son in the faith, Paul commanded Timothy concerning who and what he was to remember: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel” (2 Tim. 2:8). This verse reveals to us many key truths about how we are to be Pauline in our understanding of and ministry of the gospel.

Paul commanded Timothy to be engaged in the mental activity of remembering on an ongoing basis. His commanding Timothy to be engaging in this activity suggests that Timothy needed forceful challenge to be actively mindful of the truth that he had been given. Paul’s command also suggests that Timothy had a propensity to forget the truth that had been given to him, especially in his context of suffering for the faith.

The truth that Paul specified Timothy to be remembering concerned a Person. He said that Timothy was to be remembering Jesus, the Christ.

Paul specified further that the truth that needed to be remembered concerned Jesus, the Christ, the descendant of David. He thus pointed Timothy to the cardinal truth that Jesus was the God-appointed messianic King (cf. Acts 17:2-3; 7).

He explained further that Timothy was to be remembering Jesus, the Christ, the descendant of David, as the One having been raised from the dead. His doing so shows that for Paul, the truth concerning Jesus as the Davidic Messiah that he demanded that Timothy be actively mindful of was His having been raised from the dead. Paul could have specified that what he had wanted Timothy to be mindful of was that Jesus as the Davidic Messiah had been crucified. Had he done so, he would have been more in line with what many seem to suggest was his singular focus concerning Jesus in his own mindset, the Cross (Gal. 6:14). If in fact, Galatians 6:14 is to be understood as elevating the crucifixion of Jesus in that manner, i.e., above the Resurrection, then 2 Timothy 2:8 would be by that line of reasoning showing that at the end of his life, Paul singularly exalted the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul then stated that all that he had commanded Timothy to be remembering was according to his gospel. Saying this, Paul instructed Timothy that the central proposition of the gospel that he preached was Jesus as the Davidic Messiah’s having been raised from the dead. Making this statement, Paul did not display at the end of his life that the center of his proclamation of the gospel was the Cross somehow in elevation above or in distinction from the Resurrection. If anything, this verse, using the method of emphasizing only what is directly stated, which is the method that has been used by some in arguing for the centrality of the Cross in various passages (Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:2), shows precisely the opposite. According to what Paul explicitly taught in

2 Timothy 2:8, at the end of his life, proclamation of the gospel had as its center the resurrection of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah!

Comparing this statement with his earlier statements (Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:2), therefore, are we to understand development in Paul's thought such that early in his life it was Jesus and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2) that was the center of his gospel, but at the end of his life it was Jesus, raised from the dead, that was the center of his gospel?

Alternatively, should we not rather understand that neither statement was ever intended to pit the Crucifixion against the Resurrection in such a manner as to show that the one was the center in distinction from the other?

Those who insist that Galatians 6:14 and 1 Corinthians 2:2 prove that the Cross, and not the Resurrection, was the center of Paul's gospel, must account for this final Pauline statement concerning his gospel.¹ Moreover, strictly speaking, both Galatians 6:14 and 1 Corinthians 2:2 are descriptive statements only about Paul and not commands given by Paul to believers as to what their mindset should be. Although it is important not to make too much of that fact (cf. for example, 1 Cor. 11:1), it is also important not to make too little of that fact. The fact is that of these three statements, only 2 Timothy 2:8 explicitly concerns what Paul commanded another believer to be mindful of concerning his gospel.

Moreover, the teaching of 2 Timothy 2:8 concerning Paul's command to be remembering the Resurrection is clearly of great importance because it was given near the end of his life. When he was the most spiritually mature, Paul explicitly emphasized the Resurrection as his gospel message.

This analysis of Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:8 shows that a thorough accounting of the biblical data concerning Paul's message of the gospel does not show that his gospel was Cross-centered, if what is meant by Cross-centered is that somehow Paul viewed the Cross in distinction from the Resurrection as more central to his gospel message.

A proper analysis of 2 Timothy 2:8 establishes that proclamation of the gospel is at its essence the proclamation of the resurrection from the dead of Jesus, the Davidic Messiah. (Such proclamation includes the proclamation of His crucifixion for our sins.) The need for widespread, clear instruction about this matter is seen from the following five observations: (1) in instructional material given to men training for the ministry, a well-intentioned minister presents his readers with a "model" evangelistic message. Although he makes a brief statement about preaching the Resurrection in the discussion prior to his sample message, the message itself contains no mention of the Resurrection; (2) a well-known theologian makes no mention of the Resurrection in his chapter on the

¹ In fact, neither Galatians 6:14 nor 1 Corinthians 2:2 is explicitly a statement about what Paul *declared* as his gospel.

gospel call in his theology textbook; (3) the webpage of a Christian organization that counsels thousands of people every year used to have no mention of the Resurrection in their presentation of the gospel²; (4) a substantial percentage of gospel tracts analyzed lack mention of the Resurrection; and (5), this writer has personally observed not a few evangelistic encounters with lost people that did not include testimony to the Resurrection. These five realities suggest to this writer that there is a pressing need for widespread ministry to believers concerning the importance of Paul's instruction to *remember* Jesus Christ as the *risen* Davidic Messiah, "according to [his] gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8).

<http://www.apeopleforhisname.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Remember-the-Risen-Davidic-Messiah.pdf>

² After this omission was pointed out to them, this organization did add testimony to the Resurrection to their webpage.