

## Remember Jesus Christ

✦ for strength in hardship (vv.1-8)

✦ for hope of glory (vv.8-13)

In the name of Jesus our kind commanding officer, dear fellow soldiers of the cross:

Paul in this last letter seems much like lawyer Francis Scott Key during the War of 1812. Key was aboard a British flagship to negotiate the exchange of American prisoners. He was detained when the British guns opened up on Fort McHenry. Twenty-five hours the bombardment lasted. *The rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. At the dawn's early light the Star-Spangled Banner of America was still waving over Fort McHenry* (1814). Similarly, no matter where Paul was serving, whether walking the ancient roads of the Roman empire, or serving as a **“prisoner of Christ”** in Roman chains, Paul could always look up to see the Gospel banners waving and the glories of heaven beyond. All because of three words: **Remember Jesus Christ.**

✦ for strength in hardship (vv.1-8)

**“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”** How could we forget Jesus Christ? Sometimes we just don't know the way. As a fifth grader I told my friend we'd get out of the forest through that bright opening ahead. Unfortunately, it was blocked by a thicket of blackberry brambles too dense to penetrate. I was lost until the voice of my older brother. Roc could always find the way out. In spiritual confusion we need the way through. And only Jesus Christ can blaze a trail because Jesus is **“the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.”** (John 14:6 EHV<sup>1</sup>)

This sinful heart always wants to forget those three small words and make everything about “me.” Has the isolation of COVID made that any easier? My preferences? My music? My ease and comfort? Jesus still says: **“Pick up your cross and follow me.”** And the Lord's Apostle Paul tells Pastor Timothy and all of us to **“share hardships as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”** If we try too hard to please people or even worse, to please ourself, we fail to **“please [our] commanding officer.”** Ultimately, we only answer to the One we should never forget: **Remember Jesus Christ.**

For pastors and congregation this means to evaluate how we use our time. None of us has more than 24 hours a day. Is there something we pastors really like? Such as Thursday evening worship? The same Lord Jesus who says, **“Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs,”** also says, **“Do the work of an evangelist.”** (4:5) That means get out to those who do not yet know how to **Remember Jesus Christ.**

Which to do when – as we look **for strength in hardship?**

The competitive *athlete* must **compete according to the rules.** Staying “in bounds” to please our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly helped by our Board for Lay Ministry. After listening to my burning desire to get out into the community, they shared their concern that coming out of COVID, our members need some “pastor time.” Now I'm giving thanks for three sisters in Christ who are scheduling member visits and for all of you who have or will sign up for an hour. No pressing problem is needed. This seems to me like another way that a **hard-working farmer [can] receive a share of the crops.** It's a privilege to soothe any hurts of misunderstanding. What a blessing to see more possibilities of ministry together. Pure joy **for strength in hardship** to **Remember Jesus Christ** as Thursday evening worship continues. As he promises through Paul: **“The Lord will give you understanding in everything.”** This too...

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<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

## ✦ for hope of glory (vv.8-13)

Imagine the excitement under the Star-Spangled Banner as America finished the Panama Canal. What a reason for bursting pride was that unsinkable cruise ship, the *Titanic*! America won “the War to End All Wars,” and the League of Nations would guarantee that! Don’t argue about medicine – it will find a cure for everything. Don’t argue about politics – just elect our guys and everyone will prosper. Don’t question the Stock Market – it’s on the rise never to fall. Was that 1929, or 2008, when the housing market was only going to go up? Looking back, it’s enough to make every good Doctor Phil ask America: “How’s that working for you?” Why is it that the longer we teach our children they evolved from slime in the survival of the fittest, the more violent our society becomes? The **hope of glory** seems to slip farther away, the more we forget those three simple words: **Remember Jesus Christ**.

*Jesus* means *Savior* – the Son of God who came to suffer death in order to defeat it. This was no afterthought of God. *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the *Messiah*, promised through the chosen nation of Israel to bless Jews and Gentiles alike. Because *Jesus Christ* has “*risen from the dead*,” God says He’s satisfied with you – as long as you trust in Jesus as your Savior. The Messiah had to be “*a descendant of David*.” **Remember Jesus Christ** is! How certain was Paul that all this is true for you and me too? From deep in his prison cell Paul writes: “*This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.*” “*But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.*” (1:12) For everyone who can **Remember Jesus Christ** – His life, death and resurrection for you personally – it’s worth suffering and loss of all things. For Paul who was always on the go for the Gospel that also meant the loss of his mobility. His chains prevented member visits, but “*God’s word is not chained.*”

“*I endure all things for the sake of the elect....*” When you believe all this is true for you, you can be confident that God knew you by name from all eternity. He elected, i.e., chose you, not because of anything you are or would accomplish, not even in view of your faith, but purely out of His own great love and mercy. (Ephesians 1:3 – 2:10) God wants you to “*...obtain (experience) the salvation that is in Christ Jesus along with eternal glory.*” We died and were *buried with Christ* in Baptism (Romans 6:4); *we will also live with him*. As long as we keep our eyes on Jesus and continue in His Word (John 8:31), we will *endure*. We can patiently stay under the load of discipline and hardship until the Master takes it off. Don’t *deny* Christ by compromising God’s truth. “*If we are faithless, he remains faithful, because he cannot deny himself.*” God’s faithfulness is our assurance that in Christ, God’s law is on our side.

Francis Scott Key asked a question that applies more than ever: *O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?* Doing whatever you want against God’s will is not freedom; it’s the worst kind of slavery. As one of our history professors liked to say, “The nation that loses it’s morals, loses it’s nerve.” How can America again be *the land of the free and the home of the brave?* Three little words: **Remember Jesus Christ**.

Let’s continue in the encouragement of a dear sister in Christ, gone home from grace to glory many years ago. Evelyn Downey lived in a group home, the Arner House of Shoreview. She could only answer yes/no questions. Sometimes it was hard to make out her words, especially when she was trying to teach me more verses of “Jesus loves me, this I know....” As I was struggling to understand and remember, Evelyn finally reached over and patted me on the hand, “That’s okay; you’ll get it.”

Children of God, bound for glory, when the last trumpet sounds to begin God’s eternal day in heaven, when all who reject God’s Son as Lord and Savior finally get what they want in eternal torment, only one memory will matter at all. In time and eternity – three small words: **Remember Jesus Christ**. And to that all God’s people say, Amen!