

2 Timothy 2:8-13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2tim/2tim-2/2-timothy-28-13/>

Paul shows that even though he is imprisoned, the word of God cannot be suppressed. Paul suffers for Christ because he wants others to believe in Jesus, and for all believers to share in the reward of Christ's rule when He returns. If believers live for Him and endure suffering, we will reign with Him. If we waste our life and are disloyal, we will still get to be with Him after death, but will lose rewards we could have had.

Now Paul provides a sequence of two chiasms. The first chiasm is structured as follows:

A – Jesus, Messiah and King

B – Salvation

C – Prison

C – Prison

B – Salvation

A' – Jesus, Messiah and King

The primary point of a chiasm is its center, which in this case is “prison.” The main point is “They can put my body in prison, but they can't imprison the truth of Jesus, Messiah and King, and the word of truth which brings salvation to the world.”

The chiasm, with the attendant verses and comments follows:

A – **Jesus:** *Jesus Christ, (descendent (Son) of David, Messiah and Savior, King)*

B – **Salvation:** *Jesus is risen from the dead, to bring life to all*

C – **Prison:** *For which I (Paul) suffer hardship/imprisonment as a criminal*

C' – **Prison:** *But the word of God is not imprisoned*

B' - **Salvation:** *For which I (Paul) endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen of God, so that they also may obtain the salvation of Christ Jesus, the King*

A' - **Jesus** – *and with that salvation, eternal glory (to share the reign of Christ, the King, in His kingdom).*

The main point of a chiasm is its center; this chiasm's center is the C/C' part, "prison." They can put Paul's body in prison, but they can't imprison the word of God; truth is not something that can be captured. The fact that you are reading this is a testimony to Paul's assertion—Paul's words lived long beyond his death.

The theme of the complimentary B/B' part is "salvation"—that Jesus is *risen from the dead*, and through the good news of His resurrection (of which Paul is a servant) they *may obtain the salvation of Christ*. The theme of the complimentary A/A' part is "Jesus Christ" and the glory of the risen King and heir to the throne of David (2 Samuel 7:13), in which we can share (*the eternal glory*) of His reign.

Paul introduced this chiasm with *Remember*, which might indicate that this was taken from a saying that was shared among the church. Paul might have added *according to my gospel* as an emphasis for Timothy to teach faithfully what he had learned (2 Timothy 2:2). *Gospel* means "good tidings" and refers to all aspects of the good news that Jesus redeemed the world, brought us the free gift of eternal life, and paved the way for us to win the great prize of life through discipline, and faithful obedience.

Paul is *imprisoned*, but the *word of God* is never *imprisoned*, so Paul is advancing the word of God right up until his death for the sake of Christ.

The next chiasm has as its primary point: "reward." By putting the two chiasms together, we get "Prison—reward" Paul is in prison because he has sought to endure and win the great prize of life through faithfulness in obedience, without fearing loss, rejection or death. Paul endures hardship ("prison") to gain the reward of his occupation as a minister of the gospel.

This message supports the three examples Paul just gave, that suffering hardship gains a great reward (like a soldier, athlete, or hard-working farmer—2 Timothy 2:3-6). This is why Paul suffers, to gain the reward. It is what every believer ought to do, to gain the greatest benefit of this life. Paul is suffering hardship in prison in order to share the reign with Jesus Christ, Son of David (King) with eternal glory.

Paul supports this chiasm with another chiasm. This second chiasm might be simplified as follows:

A: **New birth:** Being born again to new life is by faith alone, apart from our deeds.

B: **Reward/Reign:** Being rewarded to reign requires good deeds, and endurance to remain faithful.

B': **Reward/Reign:** Not enduring means we will not get to reign with Christ, that reward will be lost.

A': **New Birth:** Our new birth depends on Jesus alone, not on our faithfulness in doing good deeds.

This chiasm is introduced with *It is a trustworthy statement*. This might indicate that this was a saying that circulated among the churches in its founding era. Following is the chiasm with attendant verses and comment:

A *For if we died with Him* (via faith in Christ), *we will also live with Him* (in heaven)

B *If we endure* (in obedience), *we will also reign with Him* (as a reward);

B' *If we deny Him* (in disobedience), *He also will deny us* (getting to reign with Him)

A' *If we are faithless* (in our deeds), *He* (God) *remains faithful* (to redeem us to heaven), *for He cannot deny Himself*.

The last statement that God *cannot deny Himself* points to the mechanism of the new birth in Christ. We are born again to new life in Christ through being placed into the death of Jesus, who was lifted up on a cross (John 3:14-16). We are placed into Jesus' death, and raised to new life, as depicted by water baptism (Romans 6:4). Jesus did all the work of redemption, and we did none. If God ever rejected us from being His child because *we are faithless* in our deeds, then He would be rejecting Jesus, into Whom we have been placed. This would mean that by rejecting His children, He would *deny Himself*. And God *cannot deny Himself*. God is always God.

Another way to look at the chiasm is as follows:

A **Gift** of being born again comes by grace through faith in Jesus's death on the cross

B **Prize** of rewards for faithfulness requires obedience

B' **Prize** is conditional, and only comes through enduring in faithfulness in deeds

A' **Gift** of being born again is not conditional, even if we are unfaithful in deeds

In this chiasm, the main point (at the center) is that we must endure in obedience to receive the great prize of life, which is to reign with Christ. This fits with the three examples Paul gave Timothy in verses 3-7, where Paul admonished Timothy to "suffer hardship with me" in enduring courageously to fearlessly speak the truth of the gospel. Like the soldier, athlete, and farmer, believers don't get the reward without enduring in their effort. With this "trustworthy statement" Paul is emphasizing this point.

To restate the chiasm again with some additional explanations follows:

A – Gift: *For if we died with Him* (by being placed into the death of Christ, through faith), *we will also live with Him* (forever, in heaven, as His child).

This is the promise of John 3:14-16; we will be His child simply by having enough faith to look on Jesus, hoping to be delivered from sin. This is the promise of Ephesians 2:8-9, which says we

are saved by grace, through faith. It is the assertion of Romans 8:17a, which says God is our inheritance regardless of what we do.

B – Prize: *If we endure, we will also reign with Him;* Receiving the reward of reigning with God requires that we overcome sin, the world, and fear of loss, suffering and death, as Jesus overcame, through obedience.

This is set forth in Revelation 3:21. It is also made clear in Romans 8:17b, which says we are joint heirs with Christ only if we suffer the sufferings with Christ. Reigning with Christ is a great reward, conditioned upon being a faithful witness who does not shrink back from fear. It is a great blessing, that comes from reading, understanding, and doing the admonitions in Revelation to be a faithful witness and not fear rejection, loss, or death (Revelation 1:3).

B’ – Prize: *If we deny Him, He also will deny us* (the reward of getting to reign with Him).

If we seek the rewards of the world, we will lose our reward of the inheritance. We will have our reward on earth. We will be like Esau, who traded his future inheritance (to rule the family) for a current pleasure (a bowl of stew). We lose our great reward of being a joint heir with Christ if we trade that eternal inheritance for the comforts of this life (a figurative bowl of stew) (Hebrews 12:16).

A’ - Gift: *If we are faithless* (in our deeds), *He* (God) *remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.* God will never reject His children.

We are always heirs of God, regardless of what we do (Romans 8:17a). If God rejected His children, He would be rejecting Himself, because believers, who are His children, are in Christ (Romans 8:1). He disciplined, but never rejected Israel from being His people, even though they were disobedient. God will fully restore Israel, in spite of their rejection of Him (Romans 11:26, 29). Similarly, He will never reject any child who is born of the Spirit (John 3:14-16). This is true even if we are *faithless*.

The clear picture is that, through Christ, God did all the work for us to be born again and received into His family as children. Receiving Jesus Christ by faith gains us the gift of eternal life. This is a gift that can neither be earned or lost.

However, God also prepared a calling for each of us, a set of works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). If we walk faithfully, and endure in obedience, then we will gain the unthinkable reward of reigning with Him in His eternal kingdom. The deepest purpose for which we were created will be fulfilled, to reign in the earth in harmony with one another, God, and creation (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8, Hebrews 2:5-10). We will enter into the joy of our Master, in reigning with Him (Matthew 25:21). If we do not walk faithfully, then we will be denied this reward. And scripture makes it clear that in that day, we will consider it the greatest loss imaginable.

To reign with Christ will fulfill our deepest longings, for it was the purpose for which we were created (Psalm 8: Genesis 2:15). The path to intimacy with any person is to share with them in a

great endeavor. Reigning with Christ will be entering into joy with Him (Matthew 25:21). It gives us the relational intimacy we long for as well (Philippians 3:10).

Biblical Text

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, ⁹for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. ¹⁰For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and with it* eternal glory. ¹¹ It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we 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.