

## GOD CANNOT DENY HIMSELF

***“If we are faithless [do not believe and are untrue to Him], He remains true (faithful to His Word and His righteous character), for He cannot deny Himself”*** (2 Timothy 2:13 - AMP).

Timothy was a young pastor who had been with the apostle Paul for a number of years as an assistant. Paul had taken a personal interest in Timothy and had deliberately trained him for ministry, and later placed him in leadership. When the time came that Paul was arrested and placed in prison, he knew Timothy would be concerned for him, not just because Paul might lose his life, but because Timothy might lose his friend and mentor. Paul knew that the young man would be feeling uncertain of his future, and of his ability to continue in ministry without him. He knew that Timothy would need some encouragement and stability in his life. So Paul wrote Timothy a letter of instruction and encouragement, sharing from his own experiences. In this letter, he urged Timothy not to worry about him but to remain firm and committed to ministry, regardless of the circumstances.

There are times in our lives when we too need some encouragement. Yes, there are times when we need to find stability and assurance to carry on. Five times in his letters to Timothy Paul used a phrase that sets out a specific principle or truth. In verse 11 he writes, ***“This is a faithful saying.”*** Literally, *“This saying is absolutely trustworthy,”* and it has to do with the **reliability of God’s promises**. In the short passage that follows, Paul offered 4 distinct promises to provide encouragement and assurance to Timothy - all based on the **faithfulness of God**. When we need encouragement and stability, we too must trust completely in the faithfulness of God. This is the basis of our faith!

## PROMISE (1) - GOD WILL TURN DEATH INTO LIFE

In verse 11, Paul states "***If we died with Him, we will also live with Him...***" Now it is important that we understand the grammatical construction of this verse. Notice that it doesn't say, "*If we DIE with him, we will live with him,*" it says, "*If we DIED with him.*" This is a specific action that has taken place in the past - a definite experience which has already occurred. Paul is reminding us that at the moment we became followers of Christ, something happened inside of us - part of us died. When we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we identified with His death. Therefore, we are declaring that when He died, He died for each of us individually. It's as if I had died right there on the cross with Him.

However, that's not all! Our identification with Christ's death affects not only our future, but also our present. Yes, it affects our lives right now! Since His death freed us from the power of death and sin, we don't have to feel weak and helpless in times of trials and troubles because we have His power and authority to be overcomers. As we identify with Christ's death, our motivations and desires begin to line up with His, freeing us to choose to do what is right and godly. The result is a life worth living, a life of freedom and love.

Another powerful truth concerning us having died with Him is this... All dead things that materialise in our lives can be infused with new life! That is, whatever has become lifeless; whether it is a dream, a relationship, a God given ability or anything necessary to fulfil your destiny, can be raised to new life. Hallelujah! The devil cannot lie to you anymore. You are not living in the valley of dry bones any longer, new life has been infused into every barren thing.

## PROMISE (2) - GOD WILL TURN OBSTACLES INTO ADVANTAGES

Verse 12, ***"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."*** Paul knew it would be very easy for Timothy to yield to pressure and be tempted to compromise, to keep up appearances, to do what was wrong just to survive. I'm sure we can all relate to this. Let's be honest: no one likes to be rejected. No one likes to do things that invite ridicule and hardship. We prefer to be liked, to be accepted, to blend in with the crowd. So at times, we make choices that we know are wrong, or that compromise our principles. We don't like doing it, yet we defend ourselves by saying it's necessary to survive in today's world. Here, Paul was telling Timothy: *"some things are more important than survival."* Being faithful to God is more important than keeping up appearances. Being godly is more important than being comfortable. Being honest and truthful is more important than keeping your job. Being loyal to God is more important than staying alive. Tough - but true!

We must all recognise that there are going to be obstacles, and difficulties, and temptations. There are going to be people who misunderstand us and others who deliberately abuse us. These things are very likely to happen, so we should be prepared. What's important is that we stand firm, and remain faithful; that we stay true to God through thick and thin. Too many believers are quick to blame God. This is not being loyal or trustworthy. If you want to be more like Jesus you need to remain faithful, no matter what! Faithfulness is the foundation that all of God's promises stand on. Here, Paul offers this promise, "Stand firm because it will be worth it!" God will turn those obstacles into advantages and the end result will be far greater than you could imagine. So we need to keep on enduring, right up to the end. God will reward our faithfulness with inexpressible joy and blessings. In the end, it will all be worth it!

## PROMISE (3) - GOD WILL TURN OUR DENIAL INTO LOSS

Verse 12, ***"If we deny Him, He also will deny us."*** Now we don't like to talk about this very much as we prefer to think about God's love, and mercy, and grace. In fact, God also would rather not deny us but He has no alternative. God created us with a free will. The Bible tells us that God created us in His image. As long as Adam and Eve obeyed God, they experienced His love and were at peace. But the moment they sinned, they had to measure themselves against God's other attributes: righteousness, holiness, and justice, and they brought themselves into the place of judgment. The Good News is that through Christ, we can receive God's love, mercy and grace (when we make the choice to accept it personally). As we obey God, we continue to enjoy peace and fellowship with Him. However, just as we have the right to accept Christ, we also have the right to reject Christ - to deliberately turn our backs on Him. Paul shared the consequences of that decision, *"If we disown Him, He will also disown us."* This is a serious warning - we cannot reject Christ without being rejected ourselves. There are consequences to denying your faith in Christ (disowning Him); you put your relationship with God in jeopardy. And again, I want to emphasise that this is a deliberate choice - you can't do this by accident - it is an intentional act of the free will. That is why it is so serious!

## PROMISE (4) GOD WILL TURN UNBELIEF INTO ASSURANCE

Verse 13, ***"If you are faithless (do not believe), He remains faithful (true to His word)."*** God's faithfulness is eternal because it's part of His unchanging character. He knows our heart, and our desires; He can see past the hurt, pain, sorrow, and the questions swirling around inside of us. Remember, He will respond with love and peace, answering our questions and easing our doubts. Thus gently restoring us to Himself.

When we're filled with doubt and uncertainty, we can be assured that His love and care continues to surround us, and that no matter what happens, He won't give up on us.

Here is an excerpt from Max Lucado's book, *Six Hours One Friday*.

"Though God's people often forgot their God, God didn't forget them. He kept his word... God didn't give up. He never gives up. When Joseph was dropped into a pit by his own brothers, God didn't give up. When Moses said, "Here I am, send Aaron," God didn't give up. When Aaron was making a false god at the very moment that Moses was with the true God, God didn't give up. When only two of the ten spies thought the Creator was powerful enough to deliver the created, God didn't give up.

"When Samson whispered to Delilah, when Saul roared after David, when David schemed against Uriah, God didn't give up. When God's word lay forgotten and man's idols stood glistening, God didn't give up. When the children of Israel were taken into captivity, God didn't give up. He could have given up. He could have turned his back. He could have walked away from the wretched mess, but he didn't. He didn't give up.

"So, the next time that doubt and unbelief, that obnoxious neighbour walks in, escort him out. Out to the hill. Out to Calvary. Out to the cross, where, with holy blood this great promise was written... *'God would give up His only son before He'd give up on you'*." (Quoted from chapter 5 of *"Six Hours One Friday"* by Max Lucado, 1989, Multnomah Books)

In conclusion... It's not strange or abnormal to experience times of questioning and doubt. In fact, it's very natural. For that reason, Paul wanted to reassure Timothy that, although tough times would come, in which he may question his faith, God would help him to get through.

Why? Because God is faithful. And because He is faithful, He cannot deny Himself. To deny Himself would be to change His divine substance - His very essence! To act out of character!

So what do you do when life is uncertain? Rely upon what you know to be true and completely trustworthy:

- + The Certainty of God's Grace, and
- + The Reliability of God's Promises.

And remember, God's grace and His promises are completely trustworthy and reliable only because He is faithful - **He cannot deny Himself**. He cannot act out of character!