

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

St. Paul writes of Christ the Lord that he is “persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” St. Paul is imprisoned, sentenced to death. He writes later in the same Epistle that he is being poured out like a drink offering, that his “departure” is at hand.

With physical death in sight, St. Paul raises two themes with St. Timothy – the faithfulness of the Lord, and the coming of the Last Day. For the Christian, for each of us, these bring great comfort and hope. The Lord is faithful, and soon He comes again to take us home.

Although imprisoned for the Gospel, St. Paul is not ashamed. He wrote this also to the Christians in Rome: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel.” To the Romans he explains that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. To Timothy he unpacks the Gospel. Timothy is a preacher. This is a Pastoral Epistle. The Apostle explains the power of the Gospel by detailing what that power of God is.

Christ saved us. He is our Savior. He has saved us from everything that threatens us – from our own sin, from our own death, and from the Tempter. And that He has done by calling Paul and Timothy to a holy calling. They have the Office of the Holy Ministry. And through that Office, others are called to Christ to be declared holy. Paul is entrusted with the Gospel.

In the face of his own physical death, that Gospel he is passing on to Timothy. The efficacy of the Gospel is tied to no man.

Still, God brings that Saving Word through men. Paul’s Gospel will be Timothy’s Gospel, that Christ’s Gospel be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

Christ has saved us, but not according to our works. For before God even our best works are sin-tainted. Were our salvation based on our works, there would be nothing but despair, and St. Paul would be rightly ashamed. But he is not ashamed, because we are not saved according to our works, but according to the purpose and grace of God, according to His holy will. And that holy purpose, that boundless grace, was given to each of us in Christ Jesus, before the ages began.

God’s foreknowledge and His purpose, by which we are saved in Christ, are eternal. He chose us before the worlds began. He chose us in Christ. In love and mercy He chose us. And that eternal election, that manifestation of His love and grace, Paul writes, is revealed in the present day through the Epiphany of our Savior Christ Jesus. The manifestation of God’s grace is the Incarnate Christ.

The Apostle’s catechesis of Bishop Timothy now becomes more specific. What has the Incarnate Christ done to save us? He has abolished death. Paul writes while under the death sentence. Paul will die. And yet Christ has abolished death. So Paul is not ashamed. Nor should you be, dear Christian. Christ has abolished death for you as well. He did it by removing your sins, and giving His own life as your ransom.

He bought you back with His Blood. He took your sins upon Himself, and paid the price for you, for Paul, for Timothy, and for the world. So Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel. Nor should you be. For it is the power of God unto salvation for

you who believe. Christ has abolished death. But there is more to the boundless richness of the Holy Gospel, more for Timothy to know, more for you to know, more for you to believe.

Yes, Christ has abolished death. But He has also brought life and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel. That Gospel light shines brightly enough to bring life to dying men, to Paul on death row, to Timothy, and to you. It brings incorruptibility to light in the forensic declaration of your holiness, and in the sure promise of the incorruptibility of the resurrection.

That is the Gospel into which Paul was placed as a preacher and Apostle and teacher. That is his holy calling. And by his Words, the Words given him by the Spirit of the living God, God calls you to salvation and light and incorruptibility by His Gospel. The Gospel is greater than any man, greater even than Paul. The Office of the Holy Ministry is greater than any man, greater than Paul or Timothy or this preacher. The Holy Gospel is eternal.

Paul will die at Roman hands. He will be martyred. He will die for the Gospel, as he writes: “on which account I suffer these things.” But still he is not ashamed. He is not ashamed because he has known, and knows now, that which he has believed and still believes in chains, the Holy Gospel with which he has been entrusted, is stronger than men, stronger than death. What has been committed to Paul is the power of God. And that Gospel is powerful enough to keep Paul until the Last Day.

The Apostle, preacher and teacher will soon be silenced. But Timothy now has that Gospel. That’s the power of the Gospel.

It is greater than any man. Paul committed his life and his eternal soul into Christ’s hands. He is confident that they are safe, that God will keep them until the Last Day. And the Gospel is committed into Timothy’s hands, by his holy calling. And that Gospel God will guard and keep, that you hear the same Gospel this day, and every day until the Lord comes again.

And that Gospel is - That Christ has saved us, and called us to a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us before time began in Christ Jesus, being manifest in our day through the Epiphany of Christ Jesus our Savior, who has destroyed death, and enlightened life and incorruptibility through the Gospel.

And this day that light, that life, that incorruptibility, that Gospel is brought to you. It pierces your ear and fills your soul. It is placed into your mouth and poured across your lips. It is the power of God unto salvation for you who believe. You are committed to God’s keeping. And believing, you will never die.

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