

2 Timothy 2:8-15
October 9, 2016

“God’s Logos Unchained!”

As I was beginning to think about how I would preach a sermon based on this Scripture, I was recalling examples of someone being unchained or unbound. I have a vague recollection of a movie in which Hercules, who was played by Steve Reeves, was chained up and was dramatically freed by pulling the chains through the pillars to which they had been attached. Anyone else remember that movie? Then I remembered there is a Biblical account of an Old Testament person in the Book of Judges, who was also unchained or unbound. By the way, the actual Greek word used in our Scripture does not literally say “unchained” but “unbound”. The Biblical character, who was bound and then dramatically unbound, was Samson. Making a long story short, God gave him great strength to free the Children of Israel from Philistine rule. If Samson obeyed God, including the command to not cut his hair, he would retain this great strength. He was tricked by Delilah, whom he eventually told that if his hair was cut he would lose his strength. She told the Philistines this secret, cut his hair, and Samson was taken prisoner, had his eyes put out, and was bound in bronze chains. Eventually, after praying for God to allow him to have strength one more time, so he could get revenge on the Philistines, God allowed Samson’s strength to return and he killed himself and the Philistine kings by pushing apart the middle pillars which held up the roof of the building. **From the Samson story, we find being chained or bound is the result of disobeying God’s Will or separating ourselves from our Divine Parent by chasing after and being bound to wealth and other false gods.**

You might have previously heard this following story about a famous man, who found himself bound to his wealth and illness, “the very first person to reach the status of billionaire was a driven man. At the age of 23, he had become a millionaire, by the age of 50 a billionaire. Every decision, attitude, and relationship was tailored to create his personal power and wealth. But three years later at the age of 53 he became ill. His entire body became racked with pain and he lost all the hair on his head. In complete agony, the world’s only billionaire could buy anything he wanted, but he could only digest milk and crackers. An associate wrote, ‘He could not sleep, would not smile and nothing in life meant anything to him.’ His personal, highly skilled physicians predicted he would die within a year. That year passed agonizingly slowly.”

The report of this story continues, “As he approached death he awoke one morning with the vague remembrances of a dream. He could barely recall the dream but knew it had something to do with not being able to take any of his successes with him into the next world.”

“The man who could control the business world suddenly realized he was not in control of his own life.” “He was left with a choice. He called his attorneys, accountants, and managers and announced that he wanted to channel his assets to hospitals, research, and mission work. On that very day, Clevelander John D. Rockefeller established his foundation. This new direction eventually led to the discovery of penicillin, and cures for current strains of malaria, tuberculosis and diphtheria. The list of discoveries resulting from Rockefeller’s choice is enormous.” The report of the story concludes, “But perhaps the most remarkable part of his story is that, as he began in earnest to give back a portion of all that he had earned, his body’s chemistry was altered so significantly that he got better. It looked as if he would die at 53 but he lived to be nearly 98.” (www.kluth.org/church/illustrations.doc).

The Apostle Paul explained to Timothy that his bondage – being in chains was not a result of his unfaithfully abandoning God. He wrote in **verse 9**, ***“Because I preach the Good News, I suffer and I am even chained like a criminal.”*** Indeed, history reports how many early church leaders and members were persecuted because of their faithfulness to Jesus and the Gospel or Good News!

Even though the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul is worthy of study and it provided the need for him to write some of the early churches and leaders, which eventually became part of the New Testament, it is not the focus for this message. Instead, this sermon considers closely the last portion of **verse 9**, ***“But the Word of God is not in chains”***. **Who or what is the “Word of God”?** I suspect most folks with any religious knowledge would answer that the “Word of God” is the Bible. However, there was no Bible when Paul wrote this Second Letter to Timothy. There was the Old Testament but no recognized Scriptures, which we know as the New Testament. Paul had written some of his letters but they were not considered to be Scripture by the earliest Christians. None of the Gospels were written at that time. It would be many years before the Church – the Body of Christ would declare some books and letters were the New Testament Scriptures. So, again, who or what is the “Word of God”?

Dirk G. Lange provided some insight, when he wrote, “However, the paradoxical nature of Gospel-remembering is precisely that, yes, we remember a historical person, but at the same time we remember the only person not bound by history. God’s Word, the writer carefully points out, is not chained.” Lange emphasized, ***“It is not chained to a historical moment, it is not written once and set in stone, it is here and now as living Word, that is historical and yet ever new.”*** Lange concluded, “Remembering is remembering Jesus Christ present in our midst today.” (“Remember Jesus Christ!” by Dirk G. Lange as posted on workingpreacher.org)

Lange may not have meant the same thing I am suggesting but, hopefully, he would not be totally surprised. My short answer to the question of who or what is the “Word of God” is Jesus Christ, the Son of God! A fuller explanation begins with the beginning of the Gospel of John. Please keep in mind there was no written New Testament at that time, except for some of Paul’s other letters, which would eventually be considered Scripture by the Church. We know from the reports of Paul himself and Luke’s Acts of the Apostles that the Apostle spent some quality time with John, the son of Zebedee, the youngest of Jesus’ original disciples. Although there most likely was not a written copy of the Gospel of John at that time, John would have had an oral version of some, if not, most of it. I suggest John shared with Paul some of that oral tradition, especially the portions of it which describe Jesus as the “Logos” – the Greek term for “Word”. The introduction to the written Gospel of John repeatedly referred to the “Logos” or “Word” of God. **In John 1:1-5 the gospel stated, “Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things: not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.”** Further, in verse 14, John reported, ***“The Word became a human being and, full of grace and Truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father’s Only Son.”***

One could hardly say that “Word” was chained but, the “Word” came because humanity was chained or in bondage to those things, which separate us from God – those things, which become our gods. This Good News, which Paul preached and wrote about, was shared according to the last portion of **verse 10**, ***“in order that they too may obtain the salvation that comes through Christ Jesus and brings eternal glory.”*** Jesus proved God’s Forgiveness of us and Welcoming of us back into a New Relationship with

God through his Death and Resurrection! Because Jesus was Raised, he is no longer in bondage to death. Through our unity with Jesus Christ, we will also be raised from death.

The Apostle reminded Timothy about that Truth as he went on to write in **verses 11-12a**, ***“This is a true saying:***

***‘If we have died with him,
we shall also live with him.
If we continue to endure,
we shall also rule with him.’”***

However, Paul concluded this old saying with a shocking aspect of the Gospel message. He wrote in **verses 12b-13**,

***“If we deny him,
he also will deny us.
If we are not faithful,
he remains faithful,
because he cannot be false to himself.”***

God’s Word – God’s Logos is not chained to our human failings, especially our tendency to be unfaithful! God’s Agape Love – Self-Giving and Suffering Love was and continues to be demonstrated through God’s Logos – the “Word of God”. As we follow Jesus’ – the Logos’ example, we are also unchained – welcomed into the New Relationship with God. So, Paul wrote in **verse 15**, ***“Do your best to win full approval in God’s Sight, as a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God’s Truth.”*** It is interesting to note about God’s Truth that John wrote in **John 1:17-18**, ***“grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The Only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father’s side, he has made Him known.”*** Further, let’s remember Jesus answered Pontius Pilate in **John 18:37**, ***“You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the Truth. Whoever belongs to the Truth listens to me.”***

We belong to God’s Word – the Logos and he brings us the Truth! Let us be bearers of the Truth and God’s Agape Love to all people, so they know the Truth in God’s Logos and join him in being unchained! Amen.