



2 TIMOTHY

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...for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 2 Timothy 2:9

The words, “for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer” are referring to Paul’s proclamation of the gospel. For speaking of the only message that can free humanity from the bondage of imprisonment and slavery to sin, Paul is himself held as a prisoner. His pen brings forth the irony of the situation. Although translator’s preference allows any of various words to be selected for a given original word, the use of “evildoer” is not a great choice. A person can do wrong without actually doing evil. Paul is held by the Romans for supposed wrongdoing according to their law. Thus, a word such as “criminal” would be a better choice of translation to form the proper analogy. The meaning here is technical rather than moral.

It is as a criminal that he is held, “even to the point of chains.” This is not a unique occurrence in Paul’s life. In Ephesians 6, he asked for prayers from those at Ephesus by saying, “that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19, 20). Paul was bound because of the gospel. It inhibited his ability to get out and speak, but even in his chains, he still proclaimed the word to whoever was around. He also continued to write letters, encouraging the churches he had ministered to, and providing doctrine for their continued growth. And so he next says that even though he was chained, “the word of God is not chained.”

At times while chained, Paul was able to speak forth the words of salvation to others, even to kings and governors. This is seen, for example, in Acts 26 –

“And Paul said, ‘I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.’”

-Acts 26:29

He repeats the sentiment in his letter to those at Philippi –

“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; ¹⁴ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Philippians 1:13, 14

Paul found that every possible cunning attempt, by devil and by man, was made to silence the gospel, but yet it continued to go forth. His unselfish attitude towards his Lord, and towards the message of salvation found in Christ Jesus, kept the word going. His letters did so as well, and they continue to do so 2000 years later. And based on this precious book called the Bible, which includes these letters, people are willing to follow in Paul’s example and speak boldly of Christ Jesus, even to chains or death.

Life application: How important to you is the message of salvation found in Christ Jesus? Are you willing to proclaim it, even at the expense of your freedom? What about at the expense of your life? Is that which is of infinite value worth your finite, temporary proclamation?

Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 2 Timothy 2:10

In verse 9, Paul said concerning his proclamation of the gospel, “for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains.” Before that, he gave comparisons concerning the rights and responsibilities of teaching others about Christ Jesus. He spoke of the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. They endured the challenges of their profession in order to achieve a good result. Because of these things, Paul now says, “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect.”

His many trials, physical hardships and deprivations, imprisonments, and so on, were for the sake of the elect. He had just said that “the word of God is not chained.” He was willing to take this unchained message and proclaim it even if it led to chains, and even in his chains. The elect are those who will obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. This is clearly explained in the words, “that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.” This is a statement similar to 1 Thessalonians 5:9 –

“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Relevant questions to be asked are, “Who are the elect?”, and “How does their election come about?” For the Gentile-led church age, Paul shows in Romans 15:29 that a certain number of Gentiles will come in before the partial blindness of Israel is lifted. Elsewhere, the church is equated to a building (see, for example, 1 Corinthians 3:9 & Ephesians 2:21). A building is a structure with a set size. Therefore, there are a set number who will obtain salvation in order to form this building. The “how” of the process is explained by Paul in this verse and elsewhere. It is through his proclamation of the gospel, and of any others who proclaim it.

As this is so, there is necessarily to be an active part by those already saved in order to get this word out to others. Paul and others actively wrote the epistles, and that effort will lead to some being saved. Paul and others actively proclaimed the message, and that effort will lead to some being saved, etc. This implies free will on the part of those sharing the message. They could say, “Today, I won’t go out and evangelize.” If this is their decision, then there are some who will miss hearing the words necessary for them to be saved. His words also imply free will on the part of those who then hear that message. He says he endured all of these things “that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.”

If people are saved apart from free will, then there would be no need for Paul to even say this. But somebody must share, and there must be a response to the message which is shared. Just because God knows the number of people in advance of completing the building, and just because He knows who will accept the message, it in no way negates free will in the process. In fact, as Jesus and the apostles all show, free will is a necessary part of this equation – believe, call on, receive, etc., are all active words requiring a person to respond to what they have been presented.

Once responded to, Paul says that this salvation comes “with eternal glory.” To be saved implies “from.” One is saved from something bad unto something good. If a person is drowning in the ocean, they must be saved from that. If someone is in a burning house, the fireman will go in to save him. This is what salvation is meant to bring about, a rescue. However, in salvation comes something extra, eternal glory. We aren’t just saved to live out eternity in these fallen, corruptible bodies which get sick, get tired, get cancer, etc. Rather, we are destined to receive new and incorruptible bodies (see 1 Corinthians 15). There is glory for the redeemed, and it will be eternal in duration.

Life application: Paul was willing to suffer a great deal in order get the only saving message for fallen men out. Without his (and other’s) efforts, there can be no salvation. A person who does not hear the message will not be saved. This is the means of salvation which God has chosen,

and he will not violate that by doing an end-around the labors of His people. Paul makes this clear. Faith in the messages is what saves, and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. What effort are you willing to exert in order for others to be saved?