

Title: The Promise of the Life  
Text: 2 Timothy 1:1-2  
Theme: The life of Christ that secures our life  
Series: 2 Timothy #1  
Prop Stmtnt: The life that is in Christ Jesus is the greatest treasure ever.

My task this morning is not to give you cheery little Easter talk. My task and the mission of this church are like the mission in “Saving Private Ryan.” We are to help you get home safely. We are to help you get to heaven safely. In other words, I want to help you know Christ so that you will live well, meaning that you will face adversity with hope, face blessing with humility, face suffering and death with the gospel driving every thought and sourcing every song in your mind. Living well means to live with Christ as your King, your Savior, your affections, your joy, your focus, your reward, and your goal. Everything else, as important and demanding as they may, be is second chair to the primary and happy goal of life to know Christ and make him known.

Today, we are beginning a study of the book of 2 Timothy; the final words of the apostle Paul. We will see this and feel this. These 4 chapters have a tone of urgency and a laser like focus as if Paul’s impending death brings an even greater clarity for him of what matters and what doesn’t. For many people, death does not bring greater clarity, but increased blindness. It is a sad thing to witness. A gal in our church was recently with an elderly lady who is in very bad health and the elderly lady was angry that she could no longer have a cookie because the cookie made her blood sugar go out of control. Here she was coming to the end of her life and she was angry that she could not have a cookie. So, this gal attempted to talk to her about Christ, and this lady said, *“I don’t want to talk about God, I just want to be able to eat another cookie without my blood sugar spiking.”* How does a person get to a place like that? It is actually very easy. Live every day for yourself. In the end when faced with an opportunity to talk about God and your soul or have a cookie, you’ll go with the cookie. But when you can’t have the cookie, then you will just want to die because you have nothing else to live for. That really is tragic.

2 Timothy is not about how to get cookies. This book deals with the ultimate issues. It’s not about life as the world understands it. It’s not about getting what you want right now; it’s about living now because you have real life forever. It’s about how real life forever sustains you now, how real life forever comforts you now, how real life forever makes you content, how real life forever causes your soul to be at rest, your heart to be at peace, because you know that your life forever is safe in the strong and happy arms of Christ.

Read Text:

Our attention is drawn to this phrase, “the promise of the life.”

I. **Our world makes promises it cannot keep**

Our world makes promises all the time. Advertisers, trend setters, the notorious “they” try to sell you their promises. If you wear this cologne the girls will love you. If you have

this look, your world will adore you. If you carry this purse, your friends will envy you. If you drive this car, your world will be impressed. If you have so many “likes” on Facebook, you will finally be somebody. It’s all about making a statement, being known, and the promise is this: If you have these things, then you will be happy.

But our world makes promises that it cannot keep. Can you buy a car that will never break? Recently, we went to Georgia for Arianna’s graduation as an officer and just before we got there some severe weather went through. The sign at our hotel blew off and landed directly on a car in the parking lot. Out of all the cars in the parking lot, it landed on what had been a beautiful Corvette. I never met the owner, and so I don’t know his or her story, but I know this, there are plenty of people who will buy things as if that thing is a safe place to invest their happiness. Don’t invest your happiness in something that a hotel sign in a wind storm can destroy because if you do that, you will never be able to sleep in a storm, right? If you can’t sleep in a storm, your happiness is not safe.

The world promises you happiness, but it is so shallow and so brief. But, we tend to believe and pursue those promises. We believe them so much that we envision our lives living them out. We take those promises by faith and hope that one day we will get that life. We allow the world to define what life is supposed to be and we buy it. But, we never quite get there because someone keeps changing the promises. It’s like this. Have you ever seen a sales price for a car or a lease price that seems almost too good to be true? What happens? You inquire about how you can get this car for \$89 a month and are told, oh, that deal is only for those who were born on March 32<sup>nd</sup>. There’s always something more, right? It’s like life. You are told, go to school, work hard, get good grades, be involved, get awards, get into a good college, work hard, get good grades, be involved, get awards, go to a good graduate school, work hard, get good grades and then you will get a good job, and then you will be happy. And after years and years of believing that and pursuing that, you finally land the job, and it’s well, ok, but at the end of another 75 hour week and another project put on your plate, you begin to wonder, is this it? So you look for another job, or a relationship, or another relationship, or another life, all the time thinking that there has to be more to life than this! Is this the dream that I wanted? It can’t give you what it promised. Most of us never get that far. Most of us are forced to face the fact that the kind of life we have is not the kind of life we wanted.

What kind of life do you want and what kind of life do you have? The kind of life that you want, the kind of life you desire generally turns into the kind of life you think you deserve. So, what is the life you think you deserve and what is the kind of life you have? The bigger the gap, the greater potential is for bitterness and despair. The answer is not closing the gap, it is changing your view of life and what really matters. The world defines what really matters as being big, bold, important, public, influential, and strong. It’s having the look, the clothes, the job, the car, the friends, etc. But, what is advertised as being “big” is actually small. What is portrayed as being so important, is from an eternal perspective actually insignificant.

The world makes you a promise: Bank your life on getting everything you want now (even though “now” won’t last very long, much less forever). God makes you a different

promise. Bank your life on Christ and he will give you everything you need now and forever. Why would you live for something that you cannot keep when you could live for something that you will never lose? If everything that you have is only for this life, and you have nothing for the life to come, then no matter how important you may think you are, or others say you are, you loose. And you loose big. If however, you basically have little or nothing in this life, but you have everything for the life to come, then no matter what it may look like now, you win and you win big! We see this in the life of Paul.

Paul is close to the end of his life, and where he is and what he is doing is probably not how he pictured the end. He is in prison. This prison is cold, dark, damp and lonely. It sounds as if he has few visitors and therefore, circumstantially he has very little to be happy about. But, there is no pity-party in him. The guy is not angry over getting a raw deal. He is NOT saying how unfair this is. "Look, I've done all these things for God and look at what he has allowed to happen to me." Oh no! That is not the tone of this letter at all. He is not bitter because God allowed him to experience adversity. People who are bitter live in the past. They are stuck with what happened to them and how unfair it was and they live rewinding that over and over and over. And they convince themselves that they have a case and that if they could present their case, that God would be found guilty of being unfair. Therefore, whatever happened to them in the past is so big, and so defining and so dominating that it clouds and fogs everything in the future. But people who have joy look forward. They anticipate. They have hope.

So, how does Paul do it? How do you, in spite of adversity, live with hope? How do you, in spite of sitting in a stinking jail, rotting away, waiting to be executed, laugh, sing, smile, hope, pray and call on others to the same?

This opening verse is a declaration of hope, of promise, of joy and of life. But wait a minute! Paul, you are in prison! The executioner is sharpening his blade outside your cell. Your days are numbered. You are not going free. You are not getting out. How can Paul look forward? How can Paul have such hope in such a difficult setting? Paul is not stuck in the past, because he realizes that the promise of life is bigger than anything in his past. In fact, this promise of life is all that really matters. Notice the specific wording of verse 1. The basis of Paul's life and mission and calling is according to THE promise of THE life that is in Christ Jesus. Here is what I desperately want you to understand, and believe. While our world makes promises it cannot keep...

## II. **God makes promises He cannot break.** (1)

Now, every promise has a basis, right? How do I know you are going to keep the promise? Some people make a vow. Some people put down a deposit. Some people shake hands. What did God do? God raised his Son from the dead. There you go! Jesus said, "Because I live, you will live!" Hey, that's pretty good, right? That promise of life forever, is bigger than anything in your past. The promise of life that God offers us is based upon the life of Christ.

### A. **This promise is that we get the life of Christ.**

This is huge. This is the reason why Paul is so secure even in what appears to be a very insecure position. This is the reason why Paul is so content even though he may be executed at any moment. He has something that he that he does not deserve.

Do you remember how I described bitterness? Bitterness is the result of not getting what I think I deserve. Bitterness is the result of believing a lie that I deserve an awesome life that is free from adversity and anything else that I perceive as being unfair. The greater the distance in my mind between the life that I think I deserve and the life that I have, the greater my bitterness. However!

Paul recognizes something that you must grasp. He recognizes that the life he deserves is a life of condemnation. He deserves to be judged for his sin. He deserves to face the wrath of God and the punishment of God for his rebellion against God. Paul deserves that. I deserve that. You deserve that. The life that we deserve is a life of condemnation and judgment without hope. Every single one of us has sinned against God. Every single one of us have rebelled against God and have attempted to live according to our own rules because we think that we are little gods who deserve a great life. The truth is, we are sinners who deserve to be judged for our sin and if God were only a God of justice, we would live not only with this sentence of condemnation, but with no hope of every being rescued from it.

Friend that is why Christ came to this earth. He came because you could not rescue yourself. You could not save yourself. You could never pay for your sin. You could never do anything that would be sufficient to pay the penalty of your rebellion. Your only hope for rescue is for someone else to rescue you by paying the penalty for your sin and satisfying the just, holy and infinite wrath of God that you and I deserve. Christ came to this earth and lived in your place. He lived a perfect life and then he died in your place, meaning he died as your substitute. He took your place with his life and he took your place with his death. He paid for your sin in full and left nothing for you to pay. When you understand that and you believe that and you trust in Christ as the only One who can save you, you are forgiven. You are declared righteous. You are born into the family of God. You are given an eternal inheritance that will never end and can never fade away. That is what you have. And when you trust in Christ, you not only get his life and his death, you get his resurrection. It is guaranteed.

So, even though Paul knows that he deserves eternal condemnation that is not the life that Paul has. Paul has forgiveness. Paul has been made alive in Christ. Paul has been given eternal life with God. Paul has an eternal inheritance. Paul has a life with Christ. Paul may be in prison, but the life he has in Christ, is not the life he deserves.

This is what the gospel does. The gospel tells us the truth about ourselves. The truth is we deserve judgment. But, Christ has taken our judgment that we might have “the life that is in Christ Jesus.” What kind of a life is that? It is a life of joy, a life of relationships, a life of perfection, a life of eternity, a life of laughter, a life or contentment, a life of satisfaction, a life of sheer delight, a life of being loved perfectly, a life of loving

perfectly, and a life knowing that it will never, ever, ever, ever end. Do you see it now? The life that we have in Christ is infinitely greater than the life that we deserve. The reason why Paul has such joy and that why you can have joy is because Paul has come to faith in Christ. You have to grasp that truth and believe it for yourself. As a believer, you need to be reminded of that truth. To the extent that you understand the gap between the life you deserve and the life that you have in Christ, you will have joy.

### **B. This promise has already been secured by Christ.**

We, like Paul can live out our days on this earth with absolute confidence because the life, death and resurrection of Christ demonstrate that the promise that he offers, is a promise that he has already secured. If I make a promise to you, that promise may be well intentioned, but my ability to keep that promise is only as good as the circumstances I am at the mercy of. I may promise Cathi that I will be home at 5pm, but if my car won't start, or construction shuts down the road, or something else happens like that, I will not be able to keep the promise. We make promises based on what we think will happen. The promise of life in Christ is made on the basis of what Christ has already done. He has already died and rose again. And when you come to faith in Christ, you are united with Christ. You are placed into Christ. You are joined together with Christ, forever.

This means, that when you come to faith in Christ, you get credit for his life, you get credit for his death, and you get credit for his resurrection. This is the foundation for our hope. There is no way that this cannot happen because Christ rose again from the dead. His resurrection not only demonstrated that the penalty of our sin was paid in full and that death itself died that day, but his resurrection proved that this promise was now secured for us by Christ. The resurrection of Christ, demonstrating his victory over death, is the absolute, unchanging grounding of our hope.

Conclusion:

The Roman philosopher Cicero popularized the story of the sword of Damocles. Damocles was a court flatterer. He was hired by the tyrannical king Dionysius to come in and tell the king how amazing he was. The idea of hiring someone to flatter you cannot be all that satisfying, wouldn't you think? And it wasn't. One day after Damocles had gone to great lengths to tell the king how wonderful he was, how lucky he was, how amazing his life was, the king asked Damocles if he would like to take his place and be the king. Damocles agreed and in that moment, the life that he could only dream about became his. He had just been seated on a golden couch and was being served succulent food and wine by beautiful girls when he noticed that a razor-sharp sword was hanging over his head and was suspended by a horsehair. The specter of death stole all the joy from Damocles and he asked to be excused from enjoying the life of the king.

That is life apart from Christ. You have this haunting reality that wherever you go and whatever you do, you know that no matter what, that life seems empty. You have this nagging sense that there must be more to this life than what you have found. You go to work; you go to school; you go to events, and you go home. You buy things and do them.

You hope that things will get better, and sometimes they do, briefly, but never is there contentment. Is this it? Your world keeps promising you to try this, do this, find this. But wherever you go it is like a sword that hangs over your head and even the things that you want to enjoy aren't enjoyed because it seems to be so meaningless.

Life apart from Christ is like eating your last meal in prison before going to the electric chair. You can't enjoy it like you should. You can't enjoy it, like you could. You can't enjoy like you were intended to.

But, what if you were like a character on a video game and you had 25 lives, or even 100? Wouldn't you be a little freer to take risks? Wouldn't you be a little freer to not worry, because, after all, you will live again?

But, what if you knew, that because you were in Christ, that you could never die? Then, and only then are you able to live. Come to Christ, and live.