Do you know who Lewis Urry is? He was a Canadian chemical engineer and inventor. Maybe you do not recognize the name, but you know his work. He invited the alkaline and lithium battery while working for Eveready Battery Company. We have all seen the commercials for the Energizer bunny that keeps going and going and going. We have all used enough batteries in our life to appreciate how wonderful this invention really is. We can actually power things like flashlights and games without electricity. All that power contained in little tiny battery.

As we look to this portion of God's Word, we are also looking at something that seems so small, yet is filled with more power than we could every imagine. This text is talking about the power of God's gospel - the message of Jesus and his life and death for our forgiveness. God is the one who has given his gospel and much like the Energizer bunny, it keeps going and going and going. Today let's look at: **THE REMARKABLE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.** It promises eternal life to all who believe, it spreads in spite of opposition, and it deserves our total dedication.

All our readings today talk about perseverance. In sermon text, God is encouraging Timothy and the Apostle Paul through his powerful and encouraging gospel message. At this time Paul was writing to Timothy from prison. This was not his house arrest imprisonment which was not as severe, but this was his imprisonment in the prisons of Rome that was most likely just before he died. In the middle of all this doom and gloom, we see the apostle Paul reminding Timothy and us why we can keep going even in the face of all kinds of trouble. Listen to Paul's first words of encouragement: **Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.** At first glance we might be saying to ourselves: Well this sounds pretty obvious, why doesn't he tell me something I don't already know.

But Paul knows, however, that in the stress of life on earth and even in the troubles we might face as Christians, it is all too easy to forget Jesus Christ. Christians need to be encouraged to have Jesus and his saving work in mind continually. Christianity is a religion of remembering! And, remembering Jesus is the prime motive for perseverance in our Christian lives, especially in time of opposition.

As we look at this verse, did you notice what phrase was included? Paul highlights the fact that Jesus was **raised from the dead.** Implied in this phrase, of course, is the work of Jesus on the cross. But the resurrection assures us that our sins are paid for and we are forgiven. It guarantees that Jesus has saved us! Romans 4:25 says: **He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.** For this reason Paul regularly puts the resurrection of Jesus in the spotlight.

Paul also refers to Jesus as **descended from David.** This seems like an odd statement when we are talking about finding comfort and strength. This statement however has a big purpose. It reminds us that Jesus is the promised Messiah who rules eternally on the throne of David in keeping with Old Testament prophecy. It is the perfect Savior who was true man and true God, who came and won the victory over sin and
death.

Paul makes it very clear why he is in prison: **This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.** As I said before, Paul's second imprisonment in Rome is different from his first imprisonment. During his first imprisonment he lived in a rented house and enjoyed a measure of freedom. This time he is **chained like a criminal.** From Paul's perspective, at any rate, it is for the sake of the gospel that he is suffering. Later in this letter Paul says: **Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**

Notice, too, what Paul's gospel is. It is the good news of Jesus, raised from the dead, descended from David. It is not the **Power of Positive Thinking** or **Ten Principles for a Better Life.** The example of Paul should lead us to examine our willingness to make sacrifices for the gospel. Would we be willing to be **chained like a criminal** for Christ? Do the examples of God's people of old inspire us to be willing to give everything for the sake of the gospel?

Yes, Paul was in prison, but he wanted everyone that heard his message to remember that this does not mean the end of God's Word. He writes: **But God's Word is not chained.** This little statement says much about the power of God's Word. God will see to it that his Word does its work in spite of human opposition! Paul may have a ball and chain on his leg, but the message of Jesus is off and running. We need not become discouraged when it looks bleak for Christianity. God's Word is still at work. No human power can stop it.

But why would we want to follow the gospel and preach the gospel, if it leads to some terrible things in our lives? Paul tells us why: **Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.** The elect in Bible terminology includes those already converted and those yet to be converted according to God's plan.

Concern for people's salvation is for Paul another motive for perseverance in Christian ministry. He has the eyes of Jesus toward the lost. He has a love for the lost that moves him to be a slave to everyone and to become all things to all men. He is more concerned with evangelizing the world than with his own personal comfort, safety or wealth. Paul knows that people need to hear God's Word in order to obtain eternal salvation in Christ Jesus. Paul knows that the preaching of God's Word brings persecution for the preacher. His sufferings, therefore, result in salvation for others simply because they accompany the preaching of the Word.

The questions for us might be: How are we at persevering when it comes to making sure that all people have a chance to hear God's Word? Can it be said of us that we would endure everything for the sake of the elect? Or are we likely to be cool toward mission work when there is a personal cost or sacrifice? Are we eager to do whatever it takes to make sure that the remarkable gospel is preached into all the world, or are we a little more concerned with how we are doing?

This leads us into the final part of Paul's words. It reminds us once gain we dedicate our lives to Jesus and his work. P starts this section with some simple words: **Here is a trustworthy saying.** This statement is used by Paul to highlight some important, reliable truth. He follows this little phrase with four important truths. Some think that these words might have been part of hymn that was sung during times of persecution. Whatever the background, the message is very clear.
The first two phrases kind of fit together: **If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.** The thought in these two phrases is almost the same. The believer in Jesus who continues in faith to the end will receive eternal glory. Our conversion and baptism have so linked us with Jesus that we have shared in his death and resurrection. We have died to the old life of sin. We have been raised to a new life of forgiveness and godliness. This life exists already here on earth for us and will continue eternally.

The next set of words are a little more harsh: **If we disown him, he will also disown us.** The warning is clear. If in time of persecution or hardship we deny that we are believers in Jesus or in any other way abandon him, and if we continue in such unbelief, we will be lost eternally. This warning has its place for Christians under pressure. If we are tempted to give up our faith, remember the eternal consequences! Heaven or hell for all eternity is at stake. The salvation of our own souls, therefore, is also a motive for persevering in faithful Christian ministry and in our lives as children of God.

But Paul closes this section with a reminder how wonderful God's gospel is. We know that we sin and fall short of what God wants, and we know that many people just plainly do not want to believe, but this does not nullify God's love. Paul writes: **If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.** The thought is this: even if we do not believe, God's gracious forgiveness in Christ is still real and reliable. Our unbelief does not undo or cancel the redemptive work of Jesus. Unbelief causes a person to lose the blessings of forgiveness personally, but God's grace is unchanging. The promise still stands and will be enjoyed by all who repent and believe.

Paul in such a wonderful way takes us from comfort to warning and back to comfort again. And as usual Paul ends with thoughts of God's overflowing grace. As we live on this earth, we are witnesses to God's wonderful gospel. While things on this earth may not always work perfectly, God's gospel always will not. His love, which is better than energizer bunny, will endure forever. Amen.

Pastor Keith Bilitz
St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Alma City  
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Smiths Mill