

Series	Gamma 17 – Study 12 (Suffering for the Gospel)
Reference	2 Tim 2:1-13
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Welcome back to another study in the series of Gamma. We are exploring the pastoral epistles. We are actually looking at one of the last letters Paul wrote before he was actually martyred. Study 12 looks at 2-Timothy chapter 2, the first half which is 1-13. In fact, this is one of my favourite passages in the whole Bible because it is so beautifully laid out by Paul.

Here we have a situation to remind you, how Paul writes alone, abandoned, in prison.

You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes (2 Timothy 1:15 ESV)

Impending execution because by the time you reach chapter 4, he is saying

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. (2 Timothy 4:5-7 NASB)

And Paul will be executed and beheaded. So this is a very sombre letter where he is actually pouring out his heart, his last thoughts and messages to his disciple, Timothy, the one who he mentors. Precious thoughts and messages that he wants to leave behind. And if you look at this particular passage in the 13 verses there are five imperatives. Imperatives in Greek means commands. There are five things which he commands, the tense is an imperative tense. So we are going to pick up on the five tenses and look and the five are,

1. Rely on His Strength
2. Teach faith disciples.
3. Suffer hardship
4. Meditate on his word
5. Remember

1. Continually Rely on His Strength

1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

Here we are asked to continually rely on his strength. The word strengthened is in the present passive imperative tense, which means it is a command, but it is passive, which means you are not going to be strengthened by you building up your strength or passive tense means you are going to receive strength. The strength that Christians actually have is not one of your intrinsic muscular mental strength, it is actually one given to you by God where you wait upon God and rely on his strength to come and you don't get this strength simply because you're a good boy, you prayed very high and you're like a church elder, you get it by grace, which means you don't deserve it and it is given in Christ Jesus, in the power and purpose of Christ Jesus. It is only that, because it is in a present tense it is a continual daily process. So we are actually commanded to actually continually rely on God's strength every single day. You don't have to think about tomorrow, God will provide you strength from day to day and we are actually passive recipients as long as we respond to the truth by faith.

A lot of Christians talk about getting involved with ministry is terrible, I got this, I got that, people criticize me, whatever I do is not right, I feel burnt out. You know, some time ago you can see this is a statue of Edward Colston who was a slave trader in the past in the UK and recently with the Black Lives Matter Movement, he was actually thrown into the Bristol Harbour, because people have now recognized a lot of heroes in England and Europe actually were bigots were racist.

If you look at the UK, the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 freed 800,000 Africans who were actually legal property of UK owners. 40% of the government's total experiential in 1834 was actually given not to the slaves who you have freed but to the owners to compensate them. And this was brought about by a very famous gentleman, here is Westminster Abbey and if you go right inside, you will see the statue of this chap called William Wilberforce. He was a member of parliament for Hull from 1780, who started the committee for the abolition of slave trade, which was founded in 1787. He was discouraged because he had to fight 45 years every time he tried to put forward legislation to stop slavery he was beaten back time and time again. If anybody is going to be burnt out, this is a gentlemen who would be burnt out because he has been fighting for this 45 years. In fact, John Wesley who started the Wesley Methodist Movement actually wrote to him and said,

"Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? "

And these are wise words because for a man to stand 45 years and not say I'm burnt out, I'm going to give up, he certainly must have the power. So therefore he sat back and he relied on God, renewing his strength the first day you think you're not going to be able to continue tomorrow, but tomorrow you wake up and God gives you some more strength. Then you go on and you live day by day. I don't think William Wilberforce would have thought that he had to fight for 45 years. If you tell him right off, you are going to fight for 45 years to repeal slavery, you have probably given up on the first day, but if God gives you one day and the next day and next and before you know it is almost 45 years and here is the actual document that shows the abolition of slavery in 1833. He died three days before this document was actually published, but God gave him the glory in the end.

The second thing that we need to remember, not only to be, the first thing is to continually trust in his strength because you can't do the minister of gospel without his strength. Second thing is that we've got to trust faithful men.

and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men (elders) who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2 ESV)

So therefore it's important to trust people. Because in the end, you can't last forever. Even 45 years in the end Wilberforce had to pass on the Baton to other people. He died three days before the abolition of slavery. Faithful men, important thing. The only two criteria here, you have got to be faithful, which means coming in for the long haul and number two, you have got to have some gift to be able to teach others.

D. L. Moody, the famous evangelist at the US said,

"It is better to train ten people than to do the work of ten people. But it is harder."

It is better to train 10 people to do the job of 10 people but it is harder to actually train them than to do it yourself actually. So basically the focus is the training. The father of modern missions, William Carey, before he went into missions his father actually scolded him. You don't have any gifts. You can speak very

well. You're not very clever. You know, what can you do? You know what he said? He says I can plod, which means he was faithful and he could do the work if he could persevere.

Third thing that we need to understand in the ministry of the gospel is that we have got to learn to suffer hardship. Hardship is involved because we live in an era of the easy gospel of the gospel of blessing. You go to church, you want people lay hands on you, you want the pain to go away, the suffering to go away and you don't understand that in the ministry of gospel, for which we are all involved in, if you are living in a world today you are going to be persecuted. You're going to go through very, very great difficulties. You serve in church you are going to be criticized anyway, but you must be prepared to suffer the hardship for share in the suffering as a good soldier of Christ.

He describes Timothy as a soldier. In fact, there are three metaphors, a soldier, an athlete and a farmer three and three of them will tell you three different aspects of suffering. All right. The soldier actually has single-minded devotion, exclusion of any entanglements in life. That's his suffering. The athlete has the suffering of discipline and the farmer actually has the suffering of endurance, exclusion from entanglements of life, serving the master, discipline from all the soft things in life and the luxuries and endurance, because you have got an uncertain future in terms of what the world is offering you.

What do they three have in common? The three had three things in common. All of them have single-minded devotion to whatever they are called to do, the soldier to his soldiering, athlete to running or wrestling and a farmer to his crops. They all undergo the hardship that is actually different from soldier, which is different for the athlete and different for all of them have hardship but in different nuances, different aspects of hardship. And the third one, all of them have a hope of reward. The farmer has a hope for his crops. The athletes got his hope for the crown. The soldier has got his hope for pleasing the one who enlisted him.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him (2 Timothy 2:4)

So there's a single-minded aim of which a soldier has and basically his hardship, his difficulty is to be able to suppress his urges to get involved in so many other things in life and not get entangled. The word entangled in Greek is just like a picture of this animal being tied up and tangle caught up with the daily struggles and aspirations of life, so much so that you don't have time for Godly living and ministry. Not just ministry, but Godly living. I am just too caught up. I have got too much in my business. I have got too much loans to repay. I am tied up and this describes us running in the rat race of all the needs that we actually want to supply our family and ourselves or the luxuries or the holidays that you have to work extra hard. So the soldier is the one who doesn't get entangled in such a way. Not saying that, you are not going to be involved, but you don't get involved in such a way they entangle the actually paralyzes our ability to sacrifice and minister God's word.

This is Jesus' standard of discipleship, which is really stark and is taken in Luke

As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." 59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." Luke 9: 57-59

No, nothing much wrong about burying your father. Right,

60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim

everywhere the kingdom of God.” 61 Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.” 62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:60-62 NASB)

Now I don't think Jesus in this passage is being cruel, but this is a hyperbole, basically to tell you that Jesus standard on discipleship is that you don't get entangled in the affairs of daily life so much so that you are unable to put as a priority in your life the kingdom of God, you have got to live in the way that everything else is secondary and that is Jesus' standard of discipleship. Because if you do anything less, no one after putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom, it is his radical discipleship.

An athlete is not crown unless he competes according to rules and in those days, Olympic games rules say you are supposed to stand in front of the statue of Zeus and basically swear, you've done 10 months of training. So you won't put to shame all those people whom you represent and yourself as well. An athlete is harnessed for a higher purpose. This is Paul who describes himself as an athlete.

Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:26-27 NASB)

What he is saying is that he, he basically exercises self-control in the way he lives, he avoids the temptation, so that make his body his slave rather than him being a slave to the desires of his body, for higher purpose that the gospel will have a good witness in Paul's life because otherwise if he were to live an undisciplined and unself-controlled life, whatever you preach people will look at the way you live. So the discipline and hardship of an athlete is being counterintuitive. He runs rather when he would rather walk or lie around and relax. He has got to run, he has got to eat a balanced meal when everybody else going out and have delicacies. He has to eat his balanced diet and his vegetables and a balanced diet. He sleeps right when everybody else goes out to party. He gets up early in the morning to train when everybody sleeps in. He endures with other people would rather give up and so is that how we see our Christian life? We've not got to be guided along or just drifting along with our desires. We have got to do something that is actually counterintuitive but focusing on whatever actions that we do today or tomorrow is it for the kingdom of God. That's a discipline that keeps the theme of God centre in our focus and everything else as number two.

Then there is a farmer, the hardworking farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. The word for hardworking is actually labouring to the point of exhaustion. Here again, there's a hyperbole, a farmer worked so hard that he is absolutely exhausted, and the difficulty of the farmer is that he works and works and works and with one storm the entire crop can be wiped out or there could be a drought and everything else could be burnt up, or there could be mice eating up his crops or locust eating up crops. It's a very tough life. You labour to the point of exhaustion with often uncertain future.

In Costa Rica there is a town there with a chap called Victor Landero in the town of Corozalito. And what happens here was a missionary went there to that particular town and he found out there was a chap called Victor Landero who is actually as rascal, he owned a brothel and he would sell women to have sex with other men. He himself would be living with three women and one day Victor Landero by God's grace heard the gospel and came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour. He changed completely and became an evangelist. All right. If you go to the town that he actually is Corozalito has 94 people, 92 of them are already Christian through the witness of Victor Landero as told by David Howard, the missionary. His nine siblings and parents all became Christian. In 15 years, he went around to every single town around his particular district and he preached the gospel to hundreds and thousands came to

know Jesus Christ. For 15 years, hundreds and thousands of people through this one man who was a rascal before who owned a brothel, and for the second 15 years, he went to a remote Indian village. He gave up his job, set up a little cottage there and he lives among this remote Indian village which God had actually led him to reach out to, and you know in that village instead of a harvest of thousands of hundreds and thousands of souls which he had come to expect because of his gift of evangelism. When David Howard visited him 15 years later, not a single soul came to know Christ, not a single church was planted. And you know what you told David Howard, Victor said I will spend the rest of my life with them because there is where my heart is.

Is it remarkable, it is like the farmer, for the first 15 years of his life he had great crops and his discipline, you know, it is easy to be disciplined and work because the crops keep coming. In the next 15 years, not a single crop came in, not a single person came to know Christ, but yet he persisted because of his faith, his hope is on God's power at work in the end, not what he could do. And that's the hardship of working and not seeing the fruit of your labours.

The fourth imperative continually relying on God's strength, disciple people so that they could teach. Then you've got suffer hardship. The fourth is meditating.

2 Timothy 2:7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

And it comes to us in our daily quiet time, taking Gamma lessons for example, many of the Gamma lessons have multiple points of learning on which we can actually gloss over unless we actually take them point by point. Perhaps you take the point today of in what way am I a farmer, in what way am I an athlete and you think about that and what the word of God says and you actually meditate. Because unless you meditate you are not going to be able to sink the roots of the word of God into your life and unless the word of God sinks and percolate into your life, it won't take hold. If it won't take hold when the storm comes your tree is going to fall down. So meditation is the ability to take what God's word is, understand what it is and understand how it affects every area of your particular life, whether in your secular life, whether in work life, family life, meditation is very important.

Lastly is learning to remember. Now memory is a very, very important thing. The three things which Paul tells us that we need to remember.

1. Christ's victory
2. Paul's example.
3. God's promises.

You can forget everything else in life, but these three things you cannot forget and you need to remember in order for us to be basically able to withstand the rigors of ministry for the kingdom. I remember recently Microsoft's Bing, which is such engine temporarily blocked off searches for the Tiananmen Square 'Tank Man'. Remember, many many years ago there was a re revolution in China and it was a very brave gentlemen. They called him a tank man and we never knew who he was, and whether he died or was he part of one of the casualties of thousands of people who were killed in the clampdown that came later on. But every year when they celebrate and remember the tragedy or the massacre of the Tiananmen Square, this image will continually come up because it would inspire people and recently Microsoft Bing temporarily blocked it. They thought it was a glitch and then later on they put it back in. But why is this image very very important? Well, because this image triggers memories. Memories work in three ways. According to Robyn Fivush, which is basically a professor in psychology. It gives us personal identity. Memory gives us directive in function and memory allows us to augment our social bonding.

For example, personal identity. If we have survived a tough experience, let's say a flood or even cancer, we

remember that. When we remember our brush with death, with cancer or with a flood, we remember that we have survived tough experiences and therefore we are tough people. We are survivors and we use that to project what we look like into the future. Memory has a directive function. You remember that mistakes that you did, you perhaps fell off your motorbike and you didn't wear your helmet. So next time you actually ride your motorbike you remember, I fell off last time and I didn't wear my helmet. So I'm going to wear my helmet this time. So it directs you, it guides you. Social bonding. It motivates us to build and maintain strong family ties because you, for example, you remember in the past, your father and mother spent time every night reading to you from the Bible, reading to your storyboard and that time was special. And you remember that. And when you remember that, then you actually focus, it motivates you to maintain strong family ties in our adult life.

So in both three directions, whether it is our personal identity or how we have the function of social bonding, memory consolidates all this. The ability to draw in all three types of memories predicts higher psychological wellbeing, a greater sense of purpose and more positive relationship. That's why the Bembry of Tiananmen Square is important. People remember and remember the mistakes of the past. They have bonded together in one purpose and they remember they want democracy for their country and that's why every year they remember that.

And for the Jews, they remember Exodus through the Passover and as Christians we remember the Lords Supper. Memory brings all our social identity, our spiritual identity and it galvanizes us for the fight ahead.

Now, what are we to remember? We have to remember three things

1. We have to remember Christ victory.

Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel. You remember Jesus Christ promised to us from the beginning right up from Abraham right down to David, he would be David's greater son, finally delivered to us risen from the dead. His victory on the cross tells us that we too will be victorious. So down there where we are suffering, when we're in the throws of disease or persecution, we remember Christ. He suffered, he died and he rose on the cross, so therefore the picture of the cross is never very far away from the picture of the empty tomb. The two come together, the bitter and the sweet, the victory of the resurrection cast against the darkness of the cross. That is the picture of Christ victory. That is a picture of our victory. We remember.

2. We remember Paul's example. He says,

for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory(2 Timothy 2:9-10 ESV)

So remembering Paul is very important. We remember people who suffered because their suffering testifies to the authenticity of their faith. Here is Anwar Abraham who was supposed to be locked up in jail many years ago. He is free now, but you will remember the article published in 2015 where Ambiga actually says Anwar is more dangerous in prison than on outside. He symbolizes what our struggle is about. He becomes a rallying factor for Pakatan Rakyat at that time.

So Anwar is not doing very well. Why now? Why? Because he's not in prison anymore. When he was in prison, you do much better. You're more dangerous because your emblem of suffering. In Russia today, you've got the famous dissident Victor Navalny, put in prison by Putin and that example a willing to suffer for what he believes in democracy then for the first time actually

stimulates and inspire so many people to come up unafraid of the authority to actually fight for their freedom. Hence Paul symbolizes that struggle for the gospel. He is the authenticity of his struggle. The authenticity of his faith is emblemized by the chains.

Remember the story some time ago when you've got 21 Egyptians and one African being martyred by ISIS. They were Coptic Christians all lined up on the beach when ISIS first started. They were all caught. They were actually workers at some oil plant and all of them would be beheaded one by one. And one of them was, he was an African called Matthew Ayairgan, he wasn't a Christian but as he watched each one having his head chopped off when they were challenged, whether they would renounce their faith. Each one said no, and they were killed when it came to him. You could see on his mouth, even though he was not a Christian in the end, he said their God is my God. The testimony of someone able to stand up to suffering is a witness to the authenticity. So this is Paul's example. He can endure everything for the sake of the elect. The gospel cannot be bound. Paul is suffering for a sure thing.

There are people chosen before the foundations of the world, they will get their salvation that is in Christ Jesus. That is hundred percent. So what is Paul doing? Paul is saying that I am going to suffer simply because the people for whom I'm suffering in this gospel will come to know God. They will be saved. That is a sure thing. The gospel cannot be bound. This is not a lost cause. Tiananmen Square could be a lost cause we don't know but the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a lost cause. God has determined before the foundation of the world who will be with him in the new heavens and new earth and they will escape unscathed into the new heavens and new earth. And so we are part of that mission to bring them into God's fold. So for that Paul is willing to suffer.

We are willing to suffer for so many things in life that are more uncertain than this. Why don't we give up our lives for something that is a sure thing? For the elect.

3. We need to remember in times of strife, not only his victory Paul's example, but God's promises and God's promises here are actually sketched out in an ancient Baptismal hymn. The saying is trustworthy. You can trust this. You can take this to the bank. He is saying a few things we can count on God. There are four lines to this particular hymn, and we must take this four lines step-by-step. It is extremely important because it lays down the foundation of what we believe.

Line one.

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

Baptism. Romans 6:3 (ESV) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

When we go into the water we identify with the fact that, you know, he died and we have died with him. So therefore he says we have died with him, we will live with him. We died with him, identified with him in baptism we will also live with him in the resurrection.

Romans 6:6-8 (ESV) We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

The dying with Christ on the cross is actually dying to the power of sin so that we no longer are enslaved to sin and we can actually live for the glory of God. You know we look at the 10 commandments and

said, what's the big deal about breaking the law. The issue isn't just breaking the law, the breaking of the law is a reflection of who's the boss in our lives. It's a reflection of our idolatry. All right. It's a failure of true worship. We are created by God. Every creature in this universe is created for one purpose, to worship God and to live out our created purpose. Our created purpose is to reflect, to represent and to relate to God made in the image of God. The moment you take God's picture out and put your own picture there. These laws and breaking these laws are just a reflection of the fact that who's in charge. It's we who are in charge. That is why in the garden of Eden, the snake tells Eve if you take of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, which means if you take into your own hands, then you serve moral autonomy. You are the boss. So it becomes instead of creator and creature, creature worships creator, in the end there is autonomy that creature becomes God as it were.

And the problem is you can't become God because whatever you do, you don't know what are the eternal ramifications and consequences of your action. It's like giving a child 5-year-old child the keys to your BMW. He can press the accelerator, but he doesn't understand what the consequences are going to be.

When we die to self and we die to sin, what we are doing in the cross when we say, we die with Christ we will live with Christ, what we are doing is we are replacing the centre of our life, instead of worshipping ourselves idolatry we are restoring the true centre. The true centre is God and how do you restore the true centre? We obey his law because if God is in the centre then we will naturally obey his laws because his laws are reflection of his character.

Line 2 – If we endure, we will also reign with him;

Here Paul in this last chapter describes salvation as a race,

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Salvation is a race and in Christian theology we start of the race at the cross where Christ death allows God to say to us that we are actually sinless because Christ has paid for it. We are declared righteous, but salvation consist not of justification but also sanctification is a process where you live your life and you are progressively made holy and more like God each day. The whole process, justification sanctification is subsumed under one title called salvation. Salvation is not just here and you forget about this. And the biggest problem today is people think salvation is here, the sinner's prayer, and this is optional, discipleship is optional. Sanctification is optional. We forget that the whole sanctification and justification is one salvation.

Bill Mounts who wrote the commentary on Pastoral epistles shares of the time in his church where he actually had VBS, which is a big thing in the United States, especially in the deep south. And one particular class in VBS had so many kids becoming Christians, all writing decisions for Christ, he actually investigated why is it that in VBS only this class has so many people, so many kids saying the sinner's prayer for Jesus Christ. You know what happened? The teacher there was saying, all those who don't want to burn in hell please sign this form. So all the kids were frightened. Do you want to go to hell? Nobody wants to go to hell. So they all made the decision to accept Jesus as Lord and saviour. Salvation is not being saved from hell.

Here we have a situation of the Billy Graham crusade. You know Billy Graham has preached for so many years of his life, the most effective evangelists in the history of the world. If you look at his life, he died recently. 2.2 billion people have heard his message even live once 250 million, 185 nations where he

preached and of this 2.2 billion people heard the message, 2.2 million decisions for Christ, which is a decision rate of 0.1% and he used to do altar calls and problem with altar calls is that you are basically compelled to go forward. Why? Of the power of that emotion at that particular moment? Other people are going forward, you may want to go forward because of pressure, social pressure or if you have got a good speaker like Billy Graham, rhetorical excellence and persuasion. And the trouble is, the profession of faith just making the decision is not the same as making a disciples and you have a whole generation of people who actually attended altar calls but actually think that becoming a disciple or living a righteous life fulfilling your calling is actually optional. All you have to do is just sign on the bottom line and you get a ticket to go to heaven. It actually encourages nominalism.

We actually, when you're preaching, the gospel should be like Peter, who says in Acts chapter 2, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of Holy Spirit. We have to ask people to turn away from their sin, invite people to repent and keep on repenting as a lifestyle to be a true discipleship that becoming a Christian is just not the sinner's prayer includes. It includes a life lived running to the end so that you can say like Paul, I run the race. It is a race until the end.

Romans chapter eight, verse 17. then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

You don't have a gospel blessing where we just say the sinner's prayer and that is our guarantee to go to heaven, provided we suffer. And if you want to live a holy life and fulfil God's holy call you will suffer, like an athlete, like a soldier, like a farmer and third line.

Line 3 – If we deny him he will also deny us;

Here is the fact, if you got verbal apostasy which means you say Jesus I don't love you anymore, I don't want to be with you anymore. I am ashamed of you, Mark chapter eight,

Mark 8:38 (ESV) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

If you deny him, he will deny you. And not only that, not only verbal apostasy, it is non-verbal.

Titus 1:16 (ESV) They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

So here is a number of people who are nominal Christians, who say they know God, they belong to a church, Church of England, Baptist church whatever, but the way they live ungodly lives not even moving towards holiness, disobedient unfit that is called non-verbal apostasy. Well in Christianity, there are two schools of thought. The Calvinist always believed they are predestined and so therefore you really don't have that much free will. Whoever God predestines will come to know God. Armenians on the other hand are more like Wesleyan's, Methodist church. They believe you've got free will, but in this particular matter, if you deny Christ whether a Calvinist or Armenian you will not be saved.

Armenians will say you got free will, so therefore you lose your salvation. Calvinist will never say that. It says you will never a true disciple in the first place. Whatever it is denial of Jesus Christ is apostasy. The fourth line is the one that is very important to us.

Line 4 - If we are faithless he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.

What does this mean? Is there a difference between denying Jesus and being faithless or no faith? See here, if you deny Jesus He will deny us. Here we are faithless, he remains faithful to us. What does this mean? Is there a difference? There must be a difference because the outcome is different. He remains faithful to us, here he denies us, if it is the same then it is repetitive. Isn't it? Right. So here we have a situation, if we endure with him we will reign on earth, the new heaven and new earth. If we deny him, he will deny us whether verbally or living a lie, and here we have a situation if we are faithless, faithless is not that you go no faith, but you have come to a situation where you are temporarily not faithful.

So basically there is an intermediate phase, which is in between actually enduring to the end and also denying God in apostasy. And you can see the typical situation. Peter was not rejected by God in the end. He denied actually knowing Jesus Christ who at the moment of weakness when the little servant girl asked him, Hey, aren't you one of his and he three times before the cock crows, and I think this describes Christians and he came back to Jesus Christ later on. It describes Christians who are struggling. Christians who failed, have fallen into sin but come back, in a moment of weakness that despite this moment of weakness we are not completely faithful and genuine as we should have been. God looks at us and look at us history of Israel's failure.

“They refused to listen, and did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; And You did not forsake them. (Nehemiah 9:17 NASB)

So when we to like Israel, sometimes when we fail, God gives us an opportunity to repent. He does not actually forsake them and you can look into your own life, into my life and many times in my life when I actually back-slided to a certain extent and somehow God intervened bringing a brother who was concerned, provided care, encourage and brought us back to him. Why? Because we can see in God's hands that although we were faithless, he remains faithful. Why? Because he cannot deny himself.

God is a God of promises and covenants and he will never ever forsake us. So as we remember, we not only guard the gospel but we are prepared to suffer for the gospel and we must continue to rely on His strength continually every single day, we have to remember to teach faithful disciples, remember to suffer hardship like a soldier, an athlete or a farmer. You remember to meditate and implant his word into our lives and remember Jesus Christ's victory, Paul's life and God's promises. May God add a blessing to this word that it may grow roots and fertilize your life for the gospel.