

“He Cannot Deny Himself”

“This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.
(12) *If we endure, We shall also reign with Him, If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*
(13) *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He **cannot deny Himself,**” 2 Timothy 2:11-13.*

At the time he penned these verses, the apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome, awaiting execution for the “crime” (?) of having preached the gospel of Christ! At this point in time he was writing to Timothy, his “*beloved son*” (2 Tim 1:2) “*in the faith*” (I Tim. 1:2). As he then wrote, Paul was in “*chains,*” but he rejoiced in the fact that “*the word of God is not chained,*” 2 Tim. 2:9. Unselfishly, Paul could say “*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 Tim. 2:10. He was willing to suffer that others might be saved. But as he later stated, Paul knew that “*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,*” 2 Tim. 3:12. Hence, in this epistle to his “*beloved son*” “*in the faith*” (2 Tim. 1:2; I Tim. 1:2), Paul sought to encourage Timothy to remain faithful, to never give up in his efforts to serve the Lord. And this brings us back to our opening text:

2 Tim. 2:11-13.

“This is a faithful saying...,” v. 11. Such a “*saying*” is one which is reliable, true, or “*faithful.*” On different occasions, in his epistles, Paul used the expression, “*a faithful saying.*” cf. I Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8. This “*faithful saying*” clearly says: “*if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.*” Biblically speaking, “*we died with Him*” when we, in genuine repentance, put to death the “*old man*” of sin, were “*buried*” in the waters of baptism, and rose therefrom to “*walk in newness of life,*” Rom. 6:3-4. Yes, to be able to “*live with*” Christ we must **die** to sin!

“If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us,” 2 Tim. 2:12. Yes, we must “*endure!*” “*The Christian life,*” wonderful as it is, is not “*a bed of roses!*” As has already been stated, “*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution,*” 2 Tim. 3:13. Suffering is a part of life in the flesh, but it is much better to “*suffer as a Christian,*” than to suffer as “*an evil doer,*” I Peter 4:15-16. To fail to “*endure*” is to “*deny*” Christ, and “*if we deny Him, He also will deny us,*” 2 Tim. 2:12! Cf. Matt. 10:32-33.

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful...,” 2 Tim. 2:13. Yes, God is “*faithful!*” cf. I Cor. 1:9; I John 1:9. Being “*faithful,*” God “*cannot lie,*” Tit. 1:2. Elsewhere we read that “*God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent...,”* Num. 23:19. Inasmuch as God is “*faithful,*” and therefore “*cannot lie,*” then His “*word is truth,*” John 17:17. In fact, “*the entirety*” of His “*word is truth,*” Psalm 119:160!

“He cannot deny Himself,” 2 Tim. 2:13b. Yes, God is “*Almighty,*” or all-powerful, Gen. 17:1. His “*understanding is infinite,*” Psalm 147:1. He is omnipresent; in fact, there is no way that we can successfully “*flee*” from His “*presence,*” Ps. 139:7. God is so powerful that he **spoke** the universe into existence! Yes, “***He spoke and it was done;** He commanded and it stood fast,*” Ps. 33:9. Because God’s “*understanding is*

infinite,” Ps. 147:5; because He is “*Almighty,*” Gen. 17:1, then “*with God all things are possible,*” Matt. 19:26. However, notwithstanding all this, the fact remains that God:

“Cannot Deny Himself!”

Is this a contradiction? Certainly not! We also use the word “*cannot*” to refer to that which is physically possible, but inconsistent with our sense of values. For example, if an employer tells a God-fearing Christian to lie to a client in order to obtain a more lucrative contract, the Christian (if he, like God, is “*faithful,*” 2 Tim. 2:13), will say “I cannot do that.” In other words, consistent with his convictions and character, he “*cannot*” lie or steal. By the same token, consistent with His “*faithful*” (2 Tim. 2:13) and infinitely “*holy*” (Isa. 6:3), character, there are some things even God “*cannot*” do!

As it relates to our opening text, God “*cannot deny Himself.*” God’s “*word is truth,*” John 17:17, and “*truth*” is what makes man “*free*” from the bondage and servitude of sin, John 8:32. Hence, God “*cannot*” offer salvation to those who teach and follow “*as doctrine the commandments of men,*” Matt. 15:9. According to God’s word, those who “*transgress*” and refuse to “*abide in the doctrine of Christ*” do “*not have God,*” 2 John 9. Also according to God’s word, those who add to or take “*away from*” His teachings will suffer the dire consequences, Rev. 22:18-19. Hence, if God were to ignore His revealed word and receive those who pervert His word into that heavenly city, He would be guilty of denying Himself, which His word says He “*cannot*” do.

That God has to be true to Himself is clearly set forth in His plan for redeeming sinful people. For example, God loves “*righteousness*” and He hates “*lawlessness,*” Heb. 1:9. This thought brings us to what I choose to refer to as the “*divine dilemma.*” The “*dilemma*” is this: how can God be **both** a “*just*” God **and** a **justifying** God? Inasmuch as “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*” Rom. 3:23, then if we receive **justice** we will suffer the consequences of our sins. However, if we are justified, then we are forgiven, notwithstanding the magnitude of our sins. With this in mind, please note:

Rom. 3:24-26: “*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed. To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*”

In these verses we note the word “*propitiation,*” v. 25. The verb form of this word means to appease or to render favorable. In Rom. 3:25 you will please note that “*Christ Jesus*” (v. 24) was “*set forth as a propitiation by His blood.*” cf. I John 2:2; I John 4:10. Yes, God “*loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins,*” I John 4:10. Jesus, through His sacrificial death upon the cross, paid the price for our redemption; hence, “*redemption...is in Christ Jesus,*” Rom. 3:24. Through the death of Jesus, the demands of justice were met; hence, for those who are “*in Christ Jesus,*” Rom. 3:24, God is both “*just and a justifier...*” Rom. 3:26. Apart from the death of Jesus on the cross, there is no way that God could be **both** a **just** God and at the same time a **justifying** God. He simply “*cannot deny Himself.*” Thus one whose “*faith in Jesus,*” Rom. 3:26; Mark 16:16, is sufficient to move him to be “*baptized into Christ,*” Gal. 3:27, receives the “*remission of sins,*” Acts 2:38, and therefore “*redemption through His blood,*” Eph. 1:7. However, if God were to save a person who has **not** been redeemed through the blood of His Son, then God would be contradicting His very nature, and this He “*cannot*” do without denying **Himself!** All of this brings us back to our opening text, 2 Tim. 2:11-13: “*If we died with Him,*

we shall also **live** with Him. If we endure we shall also **reign** with Him. If we deny Him He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains **faithful**; He cannot deny Himself.” The fact that God “cannot deny Himself,” for the faithful Christian, is very encouraging, for it means that God will honor his promise. But for one who chooses not to obey the gospel, or if one of His children becomes “*faithless*,” this can be very alarming. You see, **if** God “cannot deny Himself,” **then** those who reject Him will suffer the tragic and eternal consequences. Depending upon your spiritual condition, the fact that God “cannot deny Himself” is either most frightening or very, very encouraging. Friend, how is it **with you**? B. Witherington
