

# Jesus Is Worth It

## Part 1 - "Strength For The Journey"

### Text | 2 Timothy 1:1-2

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on May 5, 2019 by Pastor Barton Priebe

#### INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** I've been thinking a lot about the subject of perseverance. I mean, our need to persevere in our love for Jesus, to persevere in following him, and to persevere in using our lives in service to him. Not just for a few years but for decades until the end of our lives.
  - Part of the reason I've been thinking about it is because I see so many falling away. These are people I know who, in their 20's, were celebrated as future Christian leaders. But now they have faded away.
    - Some have faced hardships in following Jesus and so have quit. Others have rejected core biblical teachings and reinvented God to fit with our culture. Others say they are Christians but what they really live for is their careers, vacations, and hobbies. Still others have simply rejected Christianity altogether.
- But I've also been thinking about perseverance because I see my own need for it. The Bible compares the Christian life to a long journey or to a long race, like a marathon which is 42km long. Just about anyone can complete the first few kilometres of a marathon. That's easy. The real test comes when you're 20, 30, or 40km in and you're tired. There are many temptations to quit and you can do a lot of things wrong that can end up ruining your race.
  - I turn 43 this week. So, I'm well past the early stages of my race but I still have a long way to go if God grants me an average lifespan.
    - I want to persevere. I want to love him. I want him to say to me, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Yet, I can also see how many things make perseverance difficult. I can see how my heart can quickly grow to love things other than God. I have great joy but I also get tired of the ongoing struggle. I can feel the temptation to relax and start coasting instead of using my life in wholehearted service to him.
  - How about you? How is your race going? Do you love Christ? Are you seeking to find ways to serve him? My great desire is to strengthen you in your race this morning.
- So, how do we persevere right to the end of our race when there so many things that the race difficult? Today we begin a new sermon series through Paul's second letter to Timothy that will take us to the end of summer.
  - This letter is unique because it is Paul's last letter. He is an old man. He is in prison in Rome. We will hear his own struggle to persevere. He writes to a middle-aged pastor named Timothy in the city of Ephesus. Timothy also faces many struggles in following Jesus and serving him.
    - Paul writes to Timothy to exhort and encourage him to persevere. He wants to show him and us that Jesus is worth it all; worth serving, worth telling others about, and worth suffering for.
- This morning I simply want to look at verses 1-2 and do a bit of an overview of the letter. I will break this message into three parts. Part 1: the struggle we face. Part 2: the calling we are given. Part 3: the strength we receive.

#### THE STRUGGLE WE FACE

- Let's get things started then by talking about **(SHOW SLIDE 2) the struggle we face.**
  - This letter introduces us to two men: Paul and Timothy. Let's focus initially on Paul.

- **READ 1a – “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.”**
- In verse 1 Paul says it was God’s intent and purpose to save him and make him an apostle, that is one sent by Jesus himself.
  - Paul spent his life telling others about Christ and planted numerous churches all over the ancient world.
- But now Paul is an old man. His struggles have not ended. In fact, they have gotten worse. Things have changed even since his first letter to Timothy. Paul is once again imprisoned in Rome for preaching about Jesus. You can read about his first imprisonment in Rome in Acts 28. There he was confined to a rented house but was relatively comfortable and could receive guests.
  - But now Paul is in a cold dungeon and so in 2 Tim 4:13 he asks Timothy to bring him a cloak. In 2:9 he says that he is chained like a common criminal. In 1:15 he says that everyone has deserted him. Paul is lonely and this letter is a request to Timothy to come see him.
    - Worst of all, Paul is awaiting his execution, which took place shortly after writing this letter. He was beheaded. Paul knows this is the end for he writes in chapter 4 that he has “finished his race.” So Paul is struggling.
- Timothy is not under threat of death but he is, as we say, dying a thousand deaths. He is also struggling. Timothy met Paul around age 20. Timothy’s father was not a Christian but Paul took him as his spiritual son. Paul invested his life in Timothy and trained him for Christian leadership.
  - You can see their deep bond in how Paul addresses Timothy in verse 2. **READ 2a – “To Timothy, my dear son.”**
- It is not surprising then that after Paul finished his first imprisonment he left Timothy in Ephesus as the pastor of the church. He gave Timothy big leadership responsibilities.
  - Timothy was to combat the false teachers that were troubling the church, to bring proper order the church’s worship, to select and ordain elders or pastors in the church, to put the ministry to the widows in order, to invest great time into teaching the faith, and to live a holy life.
    - That was all in his first letter to Timothy.
- Now in 2 Timothy Paul is putting even greater leadership on his shoulders. For Paul knows that he is about to die and forces are at work to destroy all he has built. The Roman Emperor Nero was out to destroy the church. Everywhere Christians were being tortured and killed. False teaching was increasing and need to be refuted. People were turning away from the faith in great numbers.
  - One commentator goes so far as to write that, **“Christianity . . . trembled, humanly speaking [it was] on the verge of annihilation.”**<sup>1</sup> And so Paul is here calling Timothy be a leader in all this.
    - But Timothy struggled with this call for at least three reasons.
- First, Timothy was relatively young.
  - He is now somewhere between 35 and 40. So, he has some experience but does not feel equipped to take on such a large leadership role.
- Secondly, Timothy had some health issues. In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul referred to his **“frequent illnesses.”**
  - We don’t know what they were but he had health struggles.

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<sup>1</sup> Handley C. G. Moule, *The Second Epistle to Timothy* (The Devotional Commentary series, Religious Tract Society, 1905), 18.

- Finally, Timothy was timid by nature. He shied away from difficult tasks. When Timothy went to Corinth Paul had to pave the way for him by writing, **“If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you.”**<sup>2</sup>
  - Several times in this letter we will see that Paul has to exhort him not to run from the struggles and sufferings he faces, to not be afraid, and to not be ashamed.<sup>3</sup> One commentator says of Timothy that he was **“disposed to lean rather than to lead.”**<sup>4</sup>
    - I am so thankful for Timothy. I often can’t relate to Paul. He is such an astounding leader, preacher, theologian, church planter, and writer. But I can relate to Timothy. I know I have some gifts and I want to serve Jesus with all my heart but, like Timothy, I can sometimes feel overwhelmed by it all.
- How about you? Do you want to tell others about Jesus but to avoid it for fear it may not go well or for fear people may look down on you? Do you find yourself just wanting to take it easy in life instead of taking on service projects or leadership roles in service to Christ?
  - We are called to follow Jesus wherever he leads us. We are called into his great mission. And we are to do this not matter how difficult it gets.
    - Yet it is so easy in our culture to just step aside and let others serve. It is so easy to lack perseverance.
- All of this makes me think of the scene in *The Lord of the Rings* when the nine individuals are about half way through their difficult and dangerous quest to take the ring into the heart of the evil Lord Sauron’s lands in order to destroy it. They have endured tremendous hardship and suffering. And now they stand before the Lady Galadriel.
  - She fixes her eyes on them and delivers a fierce warning saying, **“Your Quest stands upon the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail, to the ruin of all.”**<sup>5</sup> Each of them are faced with a clear choice: continue in the quest with all of its difficulties or take the safe way and turn back to the other things they enjoy in life.
    - Then we read this: **(SHOW SLIDE 3) “Each had felt that he was offered a choice between a shadow full of fear that lay ahead, and something that he greatly desired. Clear before his mind it lay, and to get it he had only to turn aside from the road and leave the Quest and the war against Sauron to others.”**<sup>6</sup>
- The call of Christ is to follow him. To follow him into suffering for his sake. To deny ourselves and live for him. To use our lives in his service. At every stage of life there are temptations to quit following Christ, to leave the task of serving him and his cause to others, and to sit on the sideline.
  - Can you see these temptations in your life?

## THE CALLING WE ARE GIVEN

- Well, how do we deal with them? Let’s turn in the second place to talk about **(SHOW SLIDE 4) the calling we are given.**
  - In the midst of all the struggles we must remember what God has called us to do. If we were to summarize what Paul says about this calling, I would say it is *the call to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel.*
    - The gospel is the good news of what God has done and will do for us through Jesus Christ. Jesus himself is the good news. He is worth everything because he is

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 16:10.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. 1:7, 8; 2:1, 3; 3:12; 4:5.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Oliphants and Zondervan, 1956), 314.

<sup>5</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: Harper-Collins E-Books, 2005), 373.

<sup>6</sup> Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 373.

everything. We are not to be ashamed of him or his message but are to be utterly loyal to him and his cause.

- What does that mean? In this letter Paul lists four ways that we are to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel.
  - So let's do a very quick overview of the book by looking at these four things.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 5) First, to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel means we must guard it.**
  - Look at verse 14. **(SHOW SLIDE 6) READ 14 – guard the good deposit entrusted to you.** The good deposit is the message of the gospel.
    - The gospel is always under attack in our homes and churches. Some deny he rose from the dead. Others say he is good for some people but not for others. Still others consider him irrelevant.
  - In our personal lives, homes and in our church we must guard the gospel. We must ensure we know who God is, what sin is, who Jesus is, what he did, and how we are to respond in light of all this.
    - For the sake of our own salvation and that of our children we must be careful to guard the good deposit.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 7) Second, to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel means we must be willing to suffer for it.**
  - In 1:8 Paul says, **(SHOW SLIDE 8) “share in suffering for the gospel.”** In 2:3 he says, **(SHOW SLIDE 9) READ 3 - “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”** Then in 3:8-9 he writes, **(SHOW SLIDE 10) READ 8-9 - “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, <sup>9</sup>for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.”**
    - This call to suffer for the gospel is becoming increasingly more relevant for us. I don't mean suffering because you are acting offensively. I mean suffering because of your association with Jesus, with his church, and with his message. When Jesus becomes a risk to your reputation, do you avoid being known as a Christian? To be unashamedly loyal to the gospel means we must be willing to suffer for it.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 11) Third, to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel means we must persevere in it.**
  - Look over at 3:13-14. **(SHOW SLIDE 12) READ 13-14 - . . . evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.**
    - In chapter 4 Paul gives himself as illustration as one who has run the whole race and finished fighting the good fight. Christians are called to be loyal to Christ not just for a few years but for a lifetime. We are to persevere to the end.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 13) Finally, to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel means we must proclaim it.**
  - Look now at chapter 4. **(SHOW SLIDE 14) READ 1-2 - I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**
    - Paul was bold in speaking to people about Jesus. Timothy is now called to proclaim the message. It cannot be kept to ourselves. People must hear of Jesus in order to be saved.
      - So that is the calling we have received. Christians are to be unashamedly loyal to the gospel, which means guarding it, being willing to suffer for it, persevering in it, and proclaiming it.

- So we have talked about the struggle to persevere. We have now talked about what it looks like to persevere. But we need far more than instruction or Paul's example to do it. We need a deep inner strength.

### THE STRENGTH WE RECEIVE

- Let's turn now finally to talk about **(SHOW SLIDE 15) the strength we receive.**
  - Let's come back to our text. Remember, Paul is languishing in prison and about to be executed for being unashamedly loyal to the gospel. So what is the first thing he writes about? You would think he would write about death.
    - But look at what he starts with. **READ 1 – Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.**
- Do you see it? He is about to face death and yet he is not dejected? What keeps him going? He has somehow found life amidst death and discouragement.
  - Notice carefully that he doesn't find this strength by looking inside himself or by trying to stay positive. No, he is looking outside himself to Christ.
    - For notice carefully that it is the promise of life that is **"in Christ Jesus."** It is in relationship with Jesus Christ that Paul gets the kind of strength and vigor that he needs. What gives him the strength to fulfill his calling? This promise of life in Jesus Christ. Jesus is worth it.
- This little phrase **"in Christ Jesus"** is one of Paul's favourites. He uses it 165 times in his 13 letters. He uses it so much you probably read right past it. Don't do that. It is the key to everything.
  - To be in Christ means to be united to him. Through the Holy Spirit every Christian is united to Jesus so that we share in all that He is. Like a branch is united to the trunk of a tree and receives the life-giving sap of the tree, so we are united to Jesus and get his life.
    - You see we need far more than the example of others or even the example of Jesus. What we need is the life of Jesus and that is what every Christian receives as we abide in him. We receive life as we walk with him day by day, feed on his word, and seek him in prayer.
- And the life we already have will one day be fully realized for Jesus will give his people a world where there is no more death. He will give his people the tree of life that we lost in the garden.
  - And best of all, he will give his people himself. For Jesus himself is our life.

### APPLYING THE PROMISE OF LIFE

- So do you see then how Paul persevered to the end? It was his faith in this promise of life in Christ Jesus that gave them such extraordinary strength.
  - The very first thing Paul wants to remind Timothy of is this promise of life in Christ Jesus because only Christ can give us strength to fulfill the calling we are given.
- Take this issue of boldness in talking about Jesus.
  - Why do you feel embarrassed to talk about Jesus? Is not because you fear the opinions of others? But you are forgetting the life that you have, and will one day fully have, in Christ. How can you worry so much about your reputation when, in Jesus, you have all the love and acceptance you can ever dream of?
    - This doesn't mean you jam Jesus down people's throats whether they want to hear it or not. You are considerate and wise but you are bold. So because we have this promise of life in Christ, because we have tasted it, we can step out and be bold not ashamed of being known as Christians.
- Or take the issue of suffering for the gospel.

- How can you deal with people looking down on you for being a Christian? Or making fun of you? Or wrongly thinking that you hate certain people in society? You have life in Christ. Jesus said, **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**
  - I can bear the scoffing of others because I am promised the applause of the only one who really matters.
- Or take the issue of perseverance.
  - It is relatively easy to follow and serve Christ for 5 years or even 10. But faithfulness is not measured in years; it is measured in decades.
    - What will keep you going on this long journey, especially when things get hard? What will keep you from dropping out? The promise of life that in Christ Jesus. Jesus is worth it.

## CONCLUSION

- Near the end of *The Lord of the Rings* the two main characters, Frodo and Sam, are deep in the enemy’s territory. They are exhausted and short on food and water. They stop for a rest and begin to reflect on how much they are struggling to fulfill the calling they have been given.
  - **(SHOW SLIDE 16) “I don’t like anything here at all,” said Frodo, “step or stone, breath or bone. Earth, air and water all seem accursed. But so our path is laid.” “Yes, that’s so,” said Sam. “And we shouldn’t be here at all, if we’d known more about it before we started. But I suppose it’s often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of sport, as you might say. But that’s not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually—their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn’t.”**<sup>7</sup>
- Your life is part of the biggest story ever told. Christ has laid out your path for you. It will likely be filled with all kinds of difficulties and trials as you seek to follow him. It may get so difficult to follow Jesus that you are tempted to turn back.
  - But look to Christ. Be unashamedly loyal to him and keep going. You must walk the path he did, which was first the cross and then the crown. Look to him for the strength you need.
    - A day is fast approaching when the story of this world will end and, if you are in Christ, he will bring you into a new world where there is no more death, or mourning, or crying or pain. The promise of life is before you. Keep going. Jesus is worth it.

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<sup>7</sup> Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 750.