

# Jesus Is Worth It

## Part #5 - "No Matter What"

### Text | 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-7

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on June 9, 2019

#### INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** This past week we commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.
  - We honour the many who lost their lives that day to turn the tide of the war.
- Interestingly, that was not the biggest or bloodiest battle that the Americans had to fight in WW2. This would come about six months later and was called the Battle of the Bulge. To save himself from losing the war, Hitler launched a major attack to break through the Allied lines. The goal was to get to the coastal city of Antwerp in Belgium. If his forces made it, they could resupply and turn the tide of the war back in their favour.
  - On Dec 17, 1944 President Eisenhower made one of the most important decisions of the war. There is a town in Belgium called Bastogne. It stood between Hitler's forces and Antwerp. In order to block Hitler's armies from getting to Antwerp, Eisenhower declared that Bastogne be held no matter what.
    - **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** Here is a map of Bastogne. You can see that the Allied forces have set up a ring around it but Hitler is seeking to break through to capture Bastogne.
- Among the men holding the line was a company of soldiers called Easy Company.
  - They dug their foxholes at the edge of the forest outside the town. They had to just sit in them as Hitler's forces continually shelled them with mortars. But they had to hold the line no matter what. They faced other difficulties as well. Here is how the book *Band of Brothers* describes it: **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** *"On December 21, it snowed, a soft, dry snow. It kept coming, 6 inches, 12 inches. The temperature fell well below freezing, the wind came up, even in the woods. The men were colder than they had ever been in their lives. . . . No wool socks, no long underwear. . . . Shivering was as normal as breathing."*<sup>1</sup>
    - Despite being continually shelled and freezing cold, they could not leave the line. Bastogne was too valuable. They had to guard it no matter what. And guard it they did until General Patton's Third Army arrived and drove Hitler's forces away.
- In 2 Timothy Paul gives Timothy a command in verse 14. **READ 14b** - **"Guard the good deposit entrusted to you."** This is military language. Paul calls Timothy to guard this good deposit. You could translate that as "the valuable treasure." What is this valuable treasure he must guard? It is the good news about Jesus Christ.
  - The good news of what Jesus has done for sinners through his life, death, and resurrection is so valuable because it tells how human beings who deserve judgement for their sins can be forgiven and be reconciled to God for all eternity. To lose this message is to lose everything.
    - This message was under attack in Timothy's church and culture. False teachers within the church sought to change the message. Outside the church, the emperor Nero was torturing and killing Christians for believing it.
- It has been the same through history. People are always seeking to change this message, to argue that Jesus was just a good teacher, to make Jesus fit cultural views, or to even deny he existed in history.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*, 181.

- But if Jesus really is the one who can bring us life and immortality then the message about who he is and what he did is the most valuable message in the world. It is for this reason that we are called to guard this good deposit, this valuable treasure.
  - (It should go without saying but I'll say it anyways, this military metaphor is precisely that – a metaphor. In no way is Paul or Jesus calling Christians to use violence)
- And yet in some way Paul is saying we are to hold the line around this valuable treasure. And we must hold it no matter what.
  - So how do we do that? What does that look like? In this passage Paul describes three ways. Since we are called to guard the treasure of the gospel we must: *take R&R from the battle, train sergeants for the battle, and accept hardship in the battle.*

## TAKE R&R FROM THE BATTLE

- First, **(SHOW SLIDE 4) since we are called to guard the valuable treasure of the gospel we must take R&R from the battle.**
  - In military terms R&R stands for “rest and relaxation.” It is the time when soldiers move away from the battle. But the goal of R&R is to gain strength to go back into the battle. In the *Band of Brothers* book they talk of how important it was to have even a brief time away from the front line: **“Just being back 50 yards off the front line made a tremendous difference in the tension.”**<sup>2</sup>
    - True R&R though meant going back to base camp. Having a hot shower and a good meal renewed strength. Getting mail from home boosted morale by 100%.<sup>3</sup>
- Listen, if you want to live as a Christian you will continually encounter opposition for what you believe. Books and blogs will try to undermine the credibility of the Bible. Culture will pressure you to retreat from Jesus’ teaching that he is the only way to God. People will say you are narrow minded, regressive, or bigoted.
  - This continual opposition against the message of Jesus can wear you down. That is why Paul begins by talking about the need to gain strength. Look at verse 1. **READ 1 – You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**
- The first thing Timothy must do is ensure that he is strong. But notice that Paul does not say, **“Look within yourself Timothy. Believe in yourself. You can do it. Be strong!”** No. Timothy is to find strength outside himself. He is to find strength in **“the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”** In fact, the verb tense is continuous which means he is saying, **“Keep being strengthened.”**
  - Paul talked about this grace back in chapter 1:9-10. In those verses Paul sought to strengthen Timothy. He sought to put steel in his spine by reminding him of the grace that was given to him.
    - What gives a Christian strength is continually coming back to the gospel of grace. That before the beginning of time God set his love on you. He chose you. In time he sent Jesus Christ to defeat death, to rescue you and to give you immortality. Jesus did not do this because you had earned it or because you were so great. He did it out of his own purpose and grace.
- Oh what humble strength this should work in the Christian. This should take away any sense of looking down on those who oppose you and should fill you with gentleness and respect to others for

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 166.

you are not a Christian because you were so much smarter than everyone else. There is only one reason you are a Christian. God, in his grace, saved you.

- This is strength. This is steel in your spine. Christian, there is unlimited supplies of strength for you in Jesus Christ. So live every day in this book. Study it. Meditate on it. Fill your life with it. Set aside time for prayer. Luke 5:16 says, **“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”**
  - If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to *often* get away from the battle of life in order to be strengthened in prayer, how much more do we need to do this?
- Every soldier needs some R&R. Every soldier needs his or her strength renewed. So also, every Christian needs to continually renew their strength.
  - We do this by moving away from the battle and strengthening ourselves in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

### **TRAIN SERGEANTS (AND OTHER LEADERS) FOR THE BATTLE**

- **(SHOW SLIDE 5) Second, since we are called to guard the valuable treasure of the gospel we must train sergeants (and other leaders) for the battle.**
  - It has been said that Christianity is always one generation away from extinction. That may be a slight exaggeration but the point is that this tremendous message about what Jesus has done for sinners must be passed down for it to survive.
    - To guard the gospel, to ensure that we hold the line no matter what, means more than just preserving the message. It means training the next generation so they can carry it on.
- Look at verse 2. **READ 2 – and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.**
  - So there is a handing of the baton here. Paul had received his message directly from Jesus. Paul had taught Timothy. Now Timothy is to train **“reliable men.”** These reliable men are then to teach others.
- Notice the emphasis is on *what* is being taught. It is **“what you heard from me.”** This content of this message is critical for everything depends on who Jesus is and what he did.
  - Notice also that Paul taught publicly. He taught **“in the presence of many witnesses.”** Christianity is not a spirituality like Free Masonry or so many of these New Age spiritualities that claim to possess secrets that they will give if you join them. Jesus taught publicly. Jesus was publicly crucified. When he rose from the dead he publicly appeared to over 500 people.
    - Christianity then invites investigation and free discussion for it is about what God has done through Jesus in history.
- So what is Paul telling Timothy to do in order that the gospel may continue? The most immediate application is to train pastors.
  - We know it is pastors because the language here is identical to 1 Timothy and Titus. It is pastors who in 1 Tim 3 must be **“able to teach”** and in 1 Tim 5:17 pastors are to work hard in **“preaching and teaching.”** Titus 1:9 speaks about how a pastor **“must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”**
    - This is why I say train sergeants first. Sergeants then train others. This verse is a call for pastors to be involved in training other pastors so that the church will continue

from generation to generation. It's first application is to training pastors but it also involves training Christian leaders of all sorts.

- I am so encouraged by the direction Central is going with this, particularly with taking on Immerse students. Immerse is a program where students do a Master of Divinity while serving in the local church. But training pastors and Christian leaders takes time, patience, and energy. It also means choosing to put more money toward staffing in our budget because we believe in fulfilling this call in 2 Tim 2:2 to train them.
  - By God's grace we have been doing this. Well done Central! Our staffing budget is a bit bigger than it used to be in part because we are investing in training. Josh Kazakoff graduated last year. Tom Drinkwater is about to graduate. Lucas Goltz is a year away and Eric Villa is serving part time. It is one of my dreams that Central become a major hub for training pastors and Christian leaders. But this requires us all to embrace the calling of 2 Tim 2:2 and the attitude that goes with it.
    - This attitude says, ***"We will work with pastors who are learning. We will be patient as they grow and will encourage them along."*** Have you encouraged any of our young leaders lately?
- How do we guard the valuable treasure of the gospel? We focus on training up a new generation of sergeants and other leaders for the battle.

### ACCEPT HARDSHIP IN THE BATTLE

- **(SHOW SLIDE 6) Third, since we are called to guard the valuable treasure of the gospel we must accept hardship in the battle.**
  - If you want to serve Jesus you will face difficulties. Those difficulties can often make you discouraged. You can be tempted to leave the front line and seek your comfort. You can be tempted to just stop serving others and leave the church because it would be easier.
    - The reason why Christians, why I, often get so discouraged is because we have false expectations. We expect that following Jesus should make life easier not harder.
- This is where the military imagery is so helpful. Look at what Paul writes in verse 3. **READ 3 – *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.***
  - The Christian life is pictured as a battle and the Christian is compared to a soldier in the battle. This, Paul says, should teach us something, namely, that we should expect hardship. A soldier's life is not easy.
- One officer who was part of the battle for Bastogne talks about how much clothing he wore and yet how cold he was:
  - ***"I wore woolen underwear a woolen uniform, armored force combat overalls, a heavy lined trenchcoat, two pairs of heavy woolen socks, and combat boots with galoshes over them – and I cannot remember ever being warm."***<sup>4</sup>
  - ***"In the foxholes, the men tried to get some sleep, difficult to impossible given the cramped conditions (usually 6 feet by 2 feet by 3 or 4 feet deep for two men.)"***<sup>5</sup>
- Where did we ever get this idea that coming to Jesus would mean life would get easier? Jesus was very up front about what we would face. He told his disciples in Mt 10:16: ***"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves."*** Did Jesus not say, ***"No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."***

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 182.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 183.

- Do the Scriptures not tell us that we are in the middle of a war? ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”***
- So Paul is strengthening Timothy and us by saying that as we guard this valuable treasure of the gospel we will face difficulties. And we are to accept them. We are to persevere in them just like any soldier does.
  - What Paul does now is to expand on this theme. In next three verses, the Christian in general, and the pastor in particular, is compared to three different types of people engaged in different kinds of human activity. There is an illustration from military life, from the athletic world, and from agriculture.
    - Each one teaches us something about what it means to guard the gospel by accepting hardship as a soldier.

### STAY FOCUSED

- **(SHOW SLIDE 7) First, accepting hardship means staying focused, not allowing for distractions.**
  - Look at verse 4. **READ 4 – *No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.*** Getting entangled is not necessarily about getting entangled by sin. It can mean getting entangled with good things that make you lose focus. The soldiers of Easy Company couldn’t pursue hobbies or start small businesses. They were focused on obeying their commanding officers.
    - In the same way Christians are to stay focused on Christ. Focused on the message we guard. There are so many good things that can distract us so that we walk away from the gospel.
- Jesus talked about this in the parable of the sower. He spoke about how when God’s word goes out, like it is right now, people’s hearts receive it in different ways.
  - He speaks of people who just reject it and he speaks of people who receive it and produce a great harvest. But what scares me most is the third type of person. In Luke 8:14 Jesus says, ***“The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.”***
    - So this type of Christian never really matures. Why not? They lose focus. They get distracted by all the good things in life like riches and pleasures and these so take them over that they lose focus on Jesus.
- Is this not something we must give careful thought to? We always talk about how busy our lives are. Are they busy in the right things or have we become distracted from what really matters? If we do not have time to pray or read the Bible, if we hardly ever in church, if we just don’t have time to serve others, have we not become distracted?
  - As soldiers of Christ our number one goal is to stay on the front line, to keep serving our commanding officer. Does our life reflect that? Or have we become distracted? He who has ears to hear let him hear.

### STAY IN THE FIGHT

- **(SHOW SLIDE 8) Second, accepting hardship means staying in the fight, not trying to escape to comfort.**
  - Look at verse 5. **READ 5 – *An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.*** In ancient times athletes in the Olympic Games did not receive medals. They received

crowns of leaves or flowers as symbols of their victory. But this assumed they followed the rules and won fair and square. You can't cheat and expect to get a crown.

- I will never forget feeling ashamed to be a Canadian. It was in the 1988 Olympics. I was 12 years old. Ben Johnson smashed the world record in the 100m race. I was so proud to be a Canadian until two days later when he was stripped of his medal for doping.
  - Or think of Lance Armstrong. He was an unbelievable 7-time champion of the Tour De France. But all of his victories were stripped when he finally admitted that he doped.
- An athlete only gets the victory if they follow the rules. They cannot take shortcuts. They cannot avoid the difficulties and pain through drugs. In the same way Paul is saying, ***“Timothy, Jesus will award you with a crown but you must compete according to the rules.”*** The rule here is that God requires his people to accept the hardship and difficulty that comes with living for Jesus and his message.
- So this is a call for Christians to not avoid the difficulties of serving Christ. We are to stay on the line. We are to hold it no matter what. We are to serve and not to quit. And at the end we will receive the crown.

## WORK HARD

- **(SHOW SLIDE 9) Finally, accepting hardship means working hard, not being tempted to laziness.**
- **READ 6 – *It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.*** The image of the farmer emphasizes hard work and toil. So also Timothy, and all Christians, are to accept the hardship and hard work in serving Christ.
    - But the image also highlights the reward for such labour. Just as the athlete gets the crown the hard-working farmer gets to share in the harvest.
- So I ask you again: is your life being lived for Jesus? Are you on the front line and living for this valuable message?
- One obvious indication that you really are living for Christ is that you are facing difficulties in serving him, that you sometimes find it hard to serve him, that you face opposition, and that you get tired in living for this message.
    - But friends, this is why we need to come back to the first point. This is why we need to strengthen ourselves in his grace. This is why we need to remember the grace that is coming in the future. For a day is coming when Christ will return. All of these illustrations assume a great reward on the other side of the difficulties. As commentator C. K. Barrett observes: ***“Beyond warfare is victory, beyond the athlete’s effort is the prize, and beyond agricultural labor is the crop.”***<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

- This message of the gospel is everything to the Christian. We live for it. We guard it. We teach it to others. And we accept all the hardship that comes to us because of it. We must guard this valuable treasure no matter what.

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<sup>6</sup> Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: to guard the deposit*, 196–197.