

Jesus Is Worth It

Part #14 - "Persevering in Loyalty to Jesus"

Text | 2 Timothy 4:9-22

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on August 18, 2019

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** We did it! We finished the race. If you weren't here last Sunday, I began my message by sharing about a bike trip that a few of us from Central and a friend of mine from the mainland planned to do this past week.
 - Our goal was to ride our bikes from the northernmost point on Vancouver Island to the southernmost point, which is 512km. The crazy part was that we planned to do it in two days.
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** We had a lot of fun and have lots of stories but I brought all of this up last week because the apostle Paul compares the Christian life to a race. One reason Paul does this is to stress the need for perseverance.
- Perseverance was what our ride was all about. In our excitement, most of us slept less than an hour the night before the first day. It was a tough way to start a 288km ride from Port Hardy to Courtenay.
 - The ride itself had all kinds of challenges. There is one climb that is 30km long and much higher than the Malahat. After you descend that there is another climb that is 14km long and almost as high as the Malahat. **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** There were multiple flat tires along the way.
 - Add to this the fact that it started raining about 30 minutes into the ride and rained for about seven of the ten hours on the first day. **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** If Rick Stark's face and teeth look extra shiny it's because we didn't have fenders so when he rode behind me his face got power washed.
 - The second day from Courtenay to Victoria was dry. **(SHOW SLIDE 5)** We persevered and made it to the top of the Malahat. **(SHOW SLIDE 6)** It was so much fun to see all our families at the finish line. We went back to my house and celebrated with a big meal **(SHOW SLIDE 7)**
- The Christian life is like a long race. There are many joys. At times the sun is shining and you are feeling great. But there are also times when it pours rain and you have a 30km hill ahead of you. Over the years it can be tiring to keep battling against your own sin, to remain faithful to Jesus, and to keep serving him. I am often grieved as old friends or other pastors quit the race. Perseverance is surely one of the most important things we need to learn about.
 - That is what this second letter to Timothy is about. Paul is an old man and about to die. Timothy is a middle-aged Christian leader who is facing so many challenges that he feels like quitting.
 - This whole letter is Paul's encouragement to Timothy to persevere in loving Jesus and serving him. Just before our passage Paul had given himself as example of one who had finished the race. Look at verse 6. **READ 6 - *the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***
⁸Henceforth 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.
- A day is coming when all who persevere in the race will cross the finish line. You will hear the cheers of heaven. You will receive the reward. But you must persevere to the end.
 - Today we are looking at verses 9-22. This is the end of Paul's letter and includes his greetings and personal remarks. So often we just skip over these parts of Paul's letters but I want to show you that there is great instruction and encouragement here.
 - In verses 9-22 we see five things we must do to persevere in loyalty to Jesus.

COMMIT YOURSELF TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

- **(SHOW SLIDE 8) First, in order to persevere in loyalty to Jesus we must commit ourselves to Christian fellowship.**
 - Fellowship is a biblical word that describes Christians sharing our lives together because of our common unity in Christ. It includes things like caring for one another, forgiving each other, partnering together for the gospel, and encouraging each other in Christ. Every Christian needs this.
 - I've done many long bike rides alone. This was the longest ride I've done with others. What a difference! We verbally encouraged each other. We helped each other when there were mechanical issues. When we felt weak we went behind the others to shelter from the wind.
 - In verses 9-13 we get several glimpses into the importance of Christian fellowship.

BEING KEPT FROM LONELINESS

- **(SHOW SLIDE 9) First, fellowship keeps us from loneliness.**
 - We sometimes think of the apostle Paul as superhuman but here we see him in all his humanness. What we see here is a man who is struggling deeply with loneliness.
- Look at verses 9-11. **READ 9-11** – ⁹*Do your best to come to me soon.* ¹⁰*For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.* ¹¹*Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.* ¹²*Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.*
 - Oh how I love this passage. It is so raw. It is so real life. The great apostle Paul is lonely. In verse 9 he desperately wants Timothy to come and see him while he is in prison. And quickly. The reason for this is that four of his traveling companions have left him for various reasons
- Notice that Demas has left him. Demas is also mentioned in Col 4:14 and Philemon 24 as a “fellow worker” with Paul. But something happened to Demas. He has deserted Paul and Paul is clearly hurt by this. The reason for this, Paul says, is because Demas loved this world. This word “loved” is set in direct contrast with 4:8 where true believers love, or long for, the appearing of Jesus.
 - So Paul loves something and Demas loves something. Paul loves Christ's future appearing and kingdom and lives his life for this. But Demas has fallen in love with this present age. He may not have abandoned Christ but he became more concerned with his own personal comfort and so rather than suffer he abandoned Paul in his hour of need.
 - What a lesson we have here: like Demas we can begin well with Christ. We can be faithful in service for many years. And yet we can easily become more concerned with our own safety, comfort, and ease, and the fleeting pleasures of this world. Christians may not reject Jesus but they abandon the church, avoid the inconvenience of serving, and live for the pleasures of this life. What a warning!
 - Paul is clearly hurt by Demas' actions. Three of Paul's other travelling companions have also left him but they are not criticized for doing so. Crescens has gone to Galatia. Titus to Dalmatia. And Paul has sent Tychicus to Ephesus. Only Luke remains with him. All this to simply say that the great apostle is lonely.
- I really love these verses for how real they are. Christianity does not downplay feelings like loneliness as if mature believers should be above this. Rather Christianity engages us in the rawness of real life. Here we see that to be human means that we need relationships. It is not unspiritual to say we need friendship and encouragement especially during tough times.

- Paul knew this. Years earlier he was ministering in Macedonia and was exhausted from conflicts and inner fears about the work. In 2 Cor 7:6 he says he was “**depressed.**” Then he writes, “**But God . . . comforted us.**” How? “**by the coming of Titus.**” At times God directly encourages our hearts but more often than naught he uses other believers to do so.
 - This is why, if we are to persevere to the end, we need to be committed to Christian fellowship. We need to be part of a church family. We need each other. It keeps us from the discouragement of loneliness.

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST’S RECONCILING POWER

- We also see here that **(SHOW SLIDE 10) fellowship is where we encounter Christ’s reconciling power.**
 - All relationships have a certain measure of conflict. It is inevitable. But in Christian fellowship we encounter the reconciling power of Christ. This reconciling power keeps us from discouragement in the race.
- Look at verse 11. **READ 11 - Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.** That sentence is filled with evidence of God’s grace in the difficulties of Christian community. Do you remember the story of Mark and Paul?
 - It was in Acts 15. John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. Paul asked Barnabas to join him on a missionary trip. Barnabas wanted to take Mark along with them but Paul said no. Apparently, Mark had deserted them on the previous trip and Paul felt he could not be trusted. And then we read, “**They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.**”
 - Again, this is real life. Christians have problems with each other. Even Paul and Barnabas had this. But now notice that Paul is telling Timothy to bring Mark because “**he is helpful to me in my ministry.**” So apparently there has been reconciliation.
- No matter where your relationships are there will be conflict. But in the church, in committed Christian fellowship we encounter a power that no one else has. We encounter the reconciling power of Christ.
 - Is there anyone you need to reconcile with. Maybe it will take some time like with Paul and Mark but make sure you are working at it.

CARING FOR PHYSICAL NEEDS

- Finally we see that **(SHOW SLIDE 11) fellowship cares for physical needs. READ 13 - ¹³When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas.**
 - Paul had left his cloak with this man Carpus. But if you look at verse 21 we see that winter is coming. Paul knows it will be cold and needs it back. In the race of life we need help with basic things like keeping warm and this is what Paul is asking Timothy to do for him.
 - Christianity is not just high and lofty teaching about God and eternal life. It is teaching that works itself out in caring for the most basic needs of others. Christian fellowship cares for physical needs.
- Now put all of this together. What we see here is the Christian’s need for fellowship with other believers. Paul, the great apostle, admits that he needs it. We need it for loneliness. We need it for physical needs.
 - All of this then is a call to commit yourself to Christ’s people which is the church – to live not for your own comfort and ease but for others. So I simply ask you: are you committed to Christ’s people?
 - Are you investing your life into others in the church? The race is hard. This is why we need each other.

KEEP GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

- Second, **(SHOW SLIDE 12) in order to persevere in loyalty to Jesus we must keep growing in our knowledge of God.** I love this little phrase in verse 13. Look at verse 13 again. **READ 13** - ¹³ *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.*
 - Speaking on this passage, the great 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon said this: **(SHOW SLIDE 13)** *“We do not know what the books were about, and we can only form some guess as to what the parchments were. Paul had a few books which were left, perhaps wrapped up in the cloak, and Timothy was to be careful to bring them. Even an apostle must read. . . . He is inspired, and yet he wants books! He has been preaching at least for thirty years, and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants books! He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books! . . . Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. . . . You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master’s service. Paul cries, ‘Bring the books’—join in the cry.”*¹
 - If you want to persevere in loyalty to Christ and his message you need to grow, along with others, in your knowledge of Christ. Do you have a regular Bible reading time? Do you read Christian books? If you don’t know what to read please come and speak with me. I can recommend some to you.
- Just as an aside before we move on, can you imagine what this meeting would have been like when Mark and Timothy arrived? Paul, who wrote around 30% of the New Testament, is there. Luke, who also wrote about 30% of the New Testament, is there. And Mark who wrote around 10% of the New Testament, is there. So here you have three men who are responsible for around 70% of the New Testament all together in one place.
 - What did they talk about? Oh I would have loved to listen in.
 - So in order to persevere in loyalty to Jesus we must commit to Christian fellowship, and keep growing in our knowledge of God.

EXPECTING OPPOSITION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 14) Third, in order to persevere in loyalty to Jesus we must expect opposition.**
 - Look at verses 14-15. **READ 14-15** - ¹⁴ *Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.* ¹⁵ *Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.*
 - We do not know who this Alexander was but he clearly does not like Christians or the Christian message. He opposed Paul and his message. But notice Paul’s reaction: he does not seek revenge. He does not call down curses on him. He simply entrusts himself to God knowing that God is the ultimate judge. And he calls Timothy to be wise in how he deals with Alexander.
- This theme of expecting opposition has come up again and again. Back in chapter 2 Paul had told Timothy to **“share in suffering like a good soldier.”**
 - A soldier expects conflict. When we decided to do this bike ride, we expected it to be hard. If you expect that following Christ will make life easy you will inevitably be disappointed and will

¹ Charles Spurgeon, “Paul – His Cloak and His Books,” Metropolitan Tabernacle, Vol. 9., November 29, 1863.

likely quit when you face opposition. Again and again we are told to expect opposition for Jesus said, **“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you.”**

- People often follow the path of Demas because they don’t think Christianity worked for them. They thought it would solve all their problems. There is no question that when you get God some things get easier but until we cross the finish line we are to expect opposition. Getting expectations right helps us to persevere.
- So, commit to Christian fellowship, keep growing in the knowledge of God, and expect opposition.

HERALDING THE MESSAGE

- **(SHOW SLIDE 15) Fourth, in order to persevere in loyalty to Jesus we must keep heralding the message (even if it means personal suffering).**
 - This is similar to the last point but with the emphasis is now on speaking the message. Throughout the letter this has been Paul’s theme. In chapter 1 he called Timothy not to be timid and reminded him that, **“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power.”** He said, **“Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord.”** He gave himself as an example of one who was **“appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher”** and stated that, **“That is why I am suffering as I am.”** Then in chapter 4 he gave Timothy a solemn charge: **“Preach the Word: be prepared in season and out of season.”**
 - And now one last time Paul gives himself as an example as one who is speaking and suffering for Christ.
- **READ 16 - ¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!** So at the first stage of his defense trial in Rome, no other Christians supported him. Everyone deserted him. What? This is Paul. He has served everyone else for decades and yet no Christian stands with him. What a lesson here: if you want to live faithfully for Christ there may be moments when you will stand utterly alone. This should not be surprising for on the night he was betrayed Jesus was deserted by his friends.
 - I have noticed that right now we have entire generation of Christians who feel betrayed and hurt by the church. They are angry because other Christians hurt them. I do not make excuses for any of this. Many a Christian has said these sad words: **“no one came to my support.”** It is true that other Christians can hurt us.
 - But look at Paul. The church has deserted him and yet he still loves the church and says, **“May it not be held against them.”** Is Paul not following Christ? The church abandoned Christ and yet he loved her to the end. The church may hurt you and you may be left all alone but follow Paul, follow Christ, in continuing to love her. After all, she is Jesus’ bride.
- Listen to what Paul says in verse 17. **READ 17-18 – ¹⁶At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.**
 - Do you hear the persevering courage of this man? He is focused on being loyal to the gospel message. He has spoken it. The Lord has rescued him from the lion’s mouth – that is from certain death. Evil may attack him and even kill him but he will be brought safely into Jesus’ kingdom.
 - This great truth causes him to burst forth in praise to God.

- Do you see it then? This is a call to keep heralding the message even if it means suffering. What keeps us persevering is that God gives us strength and even if we have to die for our faith we are safe – safe in the arms of God who will bring us into his kingdom.
 - So do not be discouraged to speak. In order to persevere in unashamed loyalty to the gospel we must commit to Christian fellowship, keep growing in the knowledge of God, expect opposition, and keep heralding the message even if it means personal suffering.

RELYING COMPLETELY ON THE GRACE OF GOD

- **(SHOW SLIDE 16)** Finally, **in order to persevere in loyalty to the Jesus we must rely completely on the grace of God.**
- Let's be honest here. All of this is a tall order. As important as Christian community is, it can be hard. Facing opposition is difficult. Speaking for Christ, especially when we are alone and face the criticism of others, can be discouraging.
 - We may well agree that we persevere to the finish but the race is long and hard.
- That is why the close of the letter is so wonderful. If you have been a Christian for many years I bet you just breeze past the last verse. **READ 22** – ***22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*** It is like the flight attendant's instructions that you just totally ignore. It all sounds so cliché. You've heard it before and so you tune out. Don't do that now. This is massively important.
 - First, Paul says to Timothy, ***"The Lord be with your spirit."*** After reading this letter Timothy must have said, ***"Yes, oh how I need him to be with me."***
 - After giving the Great Commission Jesus said, ***"And surely I will be with you always until the end of the age."*** What strength there is for us here. Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to be with us.
- And then Paul says ***"grace be with you."*** The "you" is plural so it includes not just Timothy but all Christians who hear this letter.
 - How will we cope with opposition? How will we speak when we are afraid? Not on our own strength. It is by the grace of God. In Jesus we have God's favour. He has earned it. Christ crossed the finish line and now gives us his Spirit to empower us to run the race.
 - Are you weary in the race? Keep running. For a day is coming when you will cross the finish line. And on the other side you will meet your Saviour and he will say, ***"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."***
 - Persevere in loyalty to Jesus. He is worth it.