

It's Worth It! – 2 Timothy 2:8-13

This is the 6th message in our **Keep On** series

And last week, we talked about suffering as good soldiers of Christ

That it's more than persecution, or suffering the evil of a fallen world . . .

But also includes – getting our hands dirty, staying focused, doing the right thing, and working hard

And in the subsequent verses, Paul follows his exhortation to share in suffering – with some encouragement

Essentially saying that no matter what the cost of our suffering – **It's Worth It!**

That's the gist of what he says in our passage for today

Whatever suffering we endure as believers, it's worth it; 2 Tim 2:8-13

Whatever we suffer as believers, it's worth it – b/c first of all . . .

Because we suffer for Christ (v8)

He says in v8, *remember* – as in continually remember, Jesus Christ . . . (v8)

Nobody likes to suffer, especially for a leader who's a schmuck

Who's not worthy of your suffering

Like a bad coach; Or an angry boss; Or a deadbeat husband

Nobody likes to suffer for a poor leader

And this is Paul's way of saying – whatever suffering you're enduring as a believer, it's worth it b/c of the One for whom you suffer

Far from being a schmuck, he's *Jesus* – the Savior of the world

I'd say that's someone for whom it's worth it to suffer, wouldn't you?

Not only that, but he's the *Christ*, the Messiah

The one chosen and anointed by God to lead his people – worthy of our suffering

The one foretold through the prophets to be a king, from the line/*offspring of David*

Again, worthy of our suffering

And if all that weren't enough, he's God in the flesh, proven so by his resurrection *from the dead*

Far from being just another Joe down the street . . .

Or another religious leader from a long line of wackos . . .

He's Savior, Messiah, God, and King

Which makes him worthy of our suffering, and our suffering, worth it

Not only that, but . . .

Because we suffer for the truth (v8b-9a)

As preached in Paul's gospel (8b)

Synonymous with the word of God (9b) – the truth of who he is, what he's done, and what it means

For which Paul suffered to the point of being *bound with chains as a criminal* (9)

And the clear implication, especially when you take the remaining verses in this passage into account, is that Paul considers it all worthwhile

The suffering he endures is worth it – b/c it's for the truth

• Thankfully, others have felt the same way down through the centuries . . .

And we have it sitting in our lap as a result

Faithfully transmitted and preserved for our edification

All b/c people stood firm in their conviction that suffering for the truth was worth it

People like *John Wycliffe* – who was so opposed in the late 1300's for his hand-written translations of the Bible into English . . .

That 44 years after his death, the pope ordered his bones to be dug up, crushed, and scattered in the local river as a sign of contempt

Or *Jon Hus* – who was a follower of Wycliffe, and was burned at the stake for advocating that everyone should be allowed to read the Bible in their own language

And the kindling that was used, were some of Wycliffe's manuscripts

Or *William Tyndale* – who lived with a bounty on his head for printing the NT in English, and was eventually betrayed, jailed, strangled, and burned at the stake for it

People who believed that whatever they endured for the Truth, capital T – it was worth it

• Which is not the case for all suffering

Like the people I saw in Morelia Mexico several years back on a missions trip

We visited this historic Catholic church in the middle of the town one afternoon

And as we walked up to the gate, we noticed a couple of women slowly crawling on their knees across the rough brick courtyard, and weeping in pain as they did

And then several more inside the church, making their way toward the front where the bodies of dead “saints” were on display in glass coffins

All b/c they believed that their suffering somehow saved them, or earned them favor with God

None of which is true, which means they suffered in vain

Suffering for something that's false is definitely not worth it

Neither is suffering for something that's true, but trivial

Like $2 + 2 = 4$ – it's not worth suffering for

If somebody wants to say it equals 5, go for it

I'm not going to the gallows for that

Or suffering for something heartfelt, but inconsequential

Like saying that the Midwest is a better place to live than the coasts; or vice versa

Suffering for things that may or may not be true, or for trivial truths – is not worth it

But whatever suffering you endure for the truth of *God* – is; It's worth it

In addition to that, it's worth it . . .

Because our cause is unstoppable (v9b)

Whatever we suffer as followers of Christ, it's worth it b/c our cause is unstoppable

When it comes to being on a winning team, this is it – *the word of God is not bound* (9b)

It can't be stopped

Suppressed for a time, maybe; Forced to do an end run around, sometimes

But never stopped

Look at China, where Christianity was outlawed for decades under the ideology of Mao,
and yet the church actually grew
We didn't know it at the time, but it was happening
And as soon as his brutality ended, the church exploded

Or Romania, same thing
Where the gospel was suppressed under communism, but not bound
And as soon as the constraints were broken, the church flourished

It's like that line from Martin Luther's hymn – *A Mighty Fortress*
“The body they may kill, but God's truth abideth still”
Even if our suffering includes death, it's still worth it, b/c we die for an unstoppable cause

- A little closer to home, and nearer to our situation these days – is the fellowship of churches to which we belong; HBF
A prime example that the word of God is not bound
That when we step out in faith to do what he wants – like establishing Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting churches . . .
His word busts out

It's not constrained by our limitations; It's not held back by our inexperience
It's not inhibited by our weaknesses

- I want to show u a **video** produced by HBC-Oakville that illustrates this as good as any

The word of God is not bound
And whatever we've suffered thus far to spread it, including the personal sacrifice of so many right here in Davenport, it's been worth it
And it will continue to be worth it, b/c our cause is unstoppable

Whatever we suffer as followers of Christ, it's worth it . . .

Because people are saved (v10)

V10 – Paul was willing to endure so much, b/c he knew it would result in the salvation of others

He knew that they too would embrace the one for whom he suffered

There's no getting around the fact that the suffering of God's people (including hard work, doing the right thing, and staying focused) . . .
Is one of God's primary means to reach more of his people; to save more souls

Namely, *the elect* (10) – those whom God has chosen for salvation according to his sovereign purpose and will
A doctrine we sometimes have trouble with in our flesh, but is clearly taught in Scripture

- Like **Eph 1:4-5** – . . . *he* [God] *chose us in him* [Christ] *before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined* [determined beforehand] *us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will*
God chose for salvation, those who come to him by faith, before the beginning of time

Or a little further on in **Eph 1:11** – *In him* [in Christ] *we have obtained an inheritance* [eternal life], *having been predestined according to the purpose of him* [God] *who works all things according to the counsel of his will*

And then there's Rom 8:29-30

For those whom he foreknew [i.e. whom God foreknew; and most likely Paul is borrowing this word from the OT where it means chose] *he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers* [that Jesus might be preeminent among us].
And those whom he predestined he also called [called to faith and salvation], *and those whom he called he also justified* [declared righteous], *and those whom he justified he also glorified* [referring in the past tense to the certainty of our resurrection bodies in the future].

Bottom line? Those whom God predestines or chooses for salvation, he saves
Which means there are some he doesn't chose for salvation – the very thing he addresses in Rom 9:6-13

Where he says that God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were ever born or had done anything either good or bad . . .

All in order that God's purpose of election might continue (9:11)

And if you have a bit of a hard time with that, the next verses are for you – Rom 9:14-24
Speaking of election, he says . . . (read it)

14 – *injustice* – Is it wrong for God to choose some and not others for salvation?

16 – our salvation doesn't depend on *our* will or works, but on God's will

18 – citing Pharaoh as an example of someone's heart that God hardened, in order to show his power and make known his name

19 – Why does God still hold us accountable for our sins, if he doesn't choose us for salvation?

22-24 – What if God chooses some for destruction, in order to draw others to himself?

The implication being – he did; and he can; b/c he's God and we're not

- Now, that doesn't mean that he *rejects* people who want to come to him, who *want* to surrender to his Lordship – the Bible doesn't teach that
What it does teach is that by a decision of his will, in concert with a decision of ours – he chooses some for salvation, and others not
He chooses those who choose *him*; And those he chooses, *choose* him
And if that puts your mind in knots, you're in good company

But however it works, the point of 2 Tim 2:10, is that he often uses our suffering to bring it about

He uses us, and the suffering we endure, to reach the elect so that they too may obtain the salvation for which they are chosen

Which means that God's sovereignty in saving people, does not relieve us of the responsibility to reach them, even if it means suffering
God, in his sovereignty, has so ordained that the eternity of the elect depends on it

Whatever we suffer as followers of Christ, it's worth it b/c – people are saved, our cause is unstoppable, we suffer for the truth, we suffer for Christ, and finally . . .

Because the reward is great (v11-13)

Their reward, the reward of the elect, *and* ours

Our suffering is worth it b/c the reward is great for *everyone* involved

11 – *The saying* [referring to the following hymn or creed] *is trustworthy*

IOW, speaking of that salvation that comes with eternal glory, or great reward . . .

If we have died with him – i.e. if, by faith, we died to our old self when Jesus died our death . . .

If we crucified our sin nature when he was crucified for us . . .

We will also live with him – now, and forever; in heaven

All of which of course, is symbolized by baptism – picturing our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection

And the point Paul is making, is that – whatever we suffer for the sake of the elect, it's worth it b/c the reward of eternal life that they receive, is great

- As is the reward of reigning with him for all eternity
12a – *If we endure, we will also reign with him*
If we persevere until the end – when we die or Christ returns, whichever comes first . . .
We will reign with him, forever . . .
Enjoying the full benefits of our inheritance as children of the King

Which means that no longer will sin reign over *us*, be we will reign over *it*
Never again struggling with rebellion, but living in complete righteousness

It means we will no longer suffer the ill-effects of a *fallen* world . . .
But thoroughly enjoy the pleasures of the *next*
Like Ps 16:11 says – *at [God's] right hand are pleasures forevermore*

It means never again allowing Satan or those within his influence, to taint some portion of this world

Reigning with Christ in righteousness and pleasure, forever untainted, in a new heaven and new earth – is a reward that makes our suffering worth it

- Sweetened all the more, by the assurance of his faithfulness
13 – *If we are faithless* – if we fail to follow him at times . . .
He remains faithful – he won't fail to lead

This isn't talking about apostasy – where you renounce the faith you've professed, and reject Christ as Lord of your life
This is talking about stumbling in your walk
And if you do, he promises to be there when you get up

For he cannot deny himself – having completely invested himself in u through his Spirit . . .
Promising to never leave you or forsake you . . .
He won't go back on his word
By nature, he can't act contrary to who he is and what he's promised

Even when we sin; Even when we doubt; Even when we wander . . .
Even when we're faithless – he remains faithful

What an awesome comfort that is, when we're struggling in our faith, or stumbling in our walk

He's still there – true to his promises and faithful to his commitments

B/c that's his nature – *he cannot deny himself* (13b)

- Which is different than us denying him – 12b
If we do that, he'll deny us

If we commit apostasy – i.e. if we willfully and ongoingly turn our back on Jesus as Lord of our lives, and renounce our faith in him . . .

We not only show that we were never saved in the first place – that Jesus was never really our treasure of infinite worth . . .

But we incur God's wrath on judgment day

Jesus himself said it in **Mt 10:33** – *Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*

The result of which is – depart from me, I never knew you (Mt 7:23)

And in that there is *no* reward, nor *anything* of any worth*****

- Don't go there – even if your suffering is great
Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (Heb 10:23)

Keep on; It's worth it
B/c we suffer for Christ and the truth
An unstoppable cause for the salvation of many
Resulting in a reward that lasts forever