

Endure for the Gospel

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- [0 : 00] Last Saturday I went for a ride out where the hills are, Park Orchards, Warrandyte, you might know that area. I was ready for a bit of a challenge, but my cycling buddy, he was planning to absolutely destroy my legs.
- He took me up a hill that I had not been up before, winding hill that really dug in. My fitness had been good, but all the Christmas food I think may have taken a bite out of the work that I'd done.
- I made it to the top and I was really sucking in some big ones. I thought most of the suffering was over. Boy, was I wrong.
- We started rolling down this nice little descent and I was recovering. The road kicked up again. It didn't look too big. It's okay.
- I've got some fight left. I'm going to dig deep. I was in too high a gear, but I thought it doesn't matter. Just push. Go the distance.
- [1 : 14] We crested the hill. I let a wry smile creep over my face. Victory, you legend, Jeff. My buddy looks back at me.
- Get ready, he says. We roll down again and I scarily look up. It was only a short hill, like 100 metres.
- Not very long on a bike, but 20 metres elevation. What have I done? I went too hard too soon.
- No, I thought I can do this. I sped up. And then all those things went in your head that happen when you go, when you face barriers. Oh, just stop. Just rest. You can do this later.
- No, I shouted at them. Shut up legs. I can do this. And then with only 15 metres left, it kicks up.
- [2 : 16] It's like they laid tar at the top of the road to make it even steeper. Curse them. And like I hit an invisible wall, I had nothing left.
- The internal voice is one. I hit the brakes. Not like much was needed anyway. I put my foot down. I was so broken by it.
- I had to walk the rest of the way, which is just so shameful when you're on a bike. I was crushed. Defeated.
- I could not endure. Have you found your limit before? Have you ever been defeated?
- Perhaps something like this. Maybe something else. Person maybe. Or a subject.
- [3 : 18] An illness. Perhaps a job. Let me give a bit of context for tonight. This is our second week into Timothy.
- Last week we saw that Paul is teaching Timothy, leader of the church, that the work and service of the gospel brings suffering.
- So much so that Paul is even in prison. But Timothy should join with Paul in suffering because it is not a cause for shame.

But in the power of the spirit. But in the power of the spirit, he should boldly spread the gift of the gospel, which Paul has passed on to him. In today's passage, we're going to see these themes of suffering for the gospel continue, particularly thinking about how the gospel worker.

So let's get into it.

[4 : 24] Point one. And trust in trust. Timothy has a big job. Wouldn't you agree? He's got big shoes to fill.

Do you remember what we heard about Paul last week? Apostle of God. Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. And Timothy doesn't get the same rap, does he? He didn't get to meet the resurrected Jesus on the Damascus road.

So rightly, Paul doesn't want him doing this job alone. So have a look at verse one in your Bibles or on the screen. You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And the things you heard me say in the presence of many witnesses in trust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Paul isn't leaving Timothy in the lurch.

He loves him. He trusts him. He is his spiritual son. But in order for Timothy to take on this role, preacher, teacher, proclaimer, what must be part of his strategy is training.

[5 : 33] You need to take what you heard from me, this good deposit, and you have to hand it on. But on to who?

To anyone? In any way? Just some rando on the street? No. No. I wonder if you noticed there are three key words or phrases to take particular note of in the process of passing on the good deposit.

They are entrust, reliable people, and qualified to teach. Just think about this. If I have something precious in this box and I want it taken care of by a reliable person, would I do it like this?

Hey, Steph, I want this taken care of. Can you look after it until I get back? Sure, Jeff. What do you think? Is that how I would do it?

No. Probably not, right? Or would I do it more like this?

[6 : 57] Hi, Steph. I wonder if you could help me. I've got something in here which is very valuable to me. I wonder, would I be able to leave it in your care for a few days?

100%. Do you have any care looking after valuable things? Yes, of course. That's great. Can you tell me about your experience?

Yeah, I look after cats. That's fantastic. Now, let me just explain to you what caring for this will look like, yada, yada, yada.

Now, if something happens and you're unable to continue looking after this, Steph, can you tell me what you're going to do with it? I guess I'll give it to someone else. What kind of person?

It's got to be someone that's also reliable. Oh, thanks so much. Jeff? I'm so happy to leave that with you, Steph. I hope you could see what I was doing.

[8 : 00] Timothy has a big responsibility. And part of that responsibility is not just relieving himself of that position, but carefully entrusting his God-given responsibility to people who understand.

Now, my image falls over a bit because not every person already has experience so they can be entrusted with the gospel. Part of Timothy's job is discerning and growing reliability.

And through that process of growing a person's, sorry, and through that process, growing a person's qualification to teach.

But you see, not everyone with experience is reliable. And not everyone qualified to teach should teach.

This makes the role of Timothy or anyone in a similar role to carefully entrust all the more important, doesn't it? Such a big responsibility.

[9 : 05] How can one person deal with it? Especially understanding what we've seen, the shame, the suffering, the desertion. This is why Paul begins the way he does in verse 1.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In light of these challenges past and ahead, he says, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And we know about this grace, don't we, from what we heard last week. It's the grace that God gave every believer before creation.

And so, what's Paul really saying when he says, be strong in this? Well, you remember that Paul is not ashamed by the gospel because he knows who he believes in.

Do you remember that? Paul is completely confident of his salvation, convicted by the grace that saves him. Paul is strong in the grace that is in Jesus.

[10 : 18] Nothing can cause him to waver, not even imprisonment for it, because he trusts his Savior. And so, Paul wants this conviction firmly in the heart of his son Timothy as he takes on this important role.

He wants him to entrust, entrust, entrust the gospel, entrusting the gospel. If you do this, Timothy, you will take on that responsibility.

You will fill those shoes. You will entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others because you will train and raise leaders and teachers like yourself.

But it will be hard work, won't it? Being strong is hard work, isn't it? In fact, he goes right on to talk about suffering again in verse 3 and point 2.

Join with me in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Timothy has had a hard road ahead. Sorry, has a hard road ahead. A road of suffering.

[11 : 37] If Paul was a motivational speaker, you'd wonder at his technique. Join with me in suffering. Oh, yes, please. But Paul knows who he's talking to, doesn't he?

He hasn't rashly passed the good deposit onto a random person, but carefully entrusted onto reliable Timothy.

And so, join me in suffering is deliberate in order to prepare him. Because soldiers suffer, don't they?

This is the kind of gospel worker that Paul wants Timothy to be. A soldier of Christ willing to suffer. Someone who is committed to the cause.

Someone who doesn't give up easily. Someone with real stamina. Someone who trusts the commanding officer. All the more reason for Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[12 : 46] Paul has more to say about what gospel work looks like. And so, he adds to this soldier image, doesn't he? So, look again from verse 3.

Join with me in suffering like a good soldier. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. The hard-working farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

Paul draws comparison between gospel worker and three hard-working professions.

Soldier, athlete, farmer. Firstly, soldiers, he's talked a bit about already, but they don't only suffer. They also don't get involved, entangled in civilian affairs.

- [13 : 48] What are they? They are focused. They are undivided, devoted. If there are distractions, they keep on track. They don't begrudge their commanding officer.
- They seek to please them. Secondly, athletes, if they want the gold, what do they do? Well, there's only one way to get it, isn't there?
- Hard work. Do you remember the 2020 Russian Olympic team? Banned for doping. Do you know what the punishment was?
- Not being able to enter the Olympics under their own flag? Suffering is not just about pushing through the pain, riding up steep hills until you're seeing stars.
- Suffering is about focus. It's about devotion. It's about devotion. The soldier does have a life, but she has made her priorities.
- [14 : 53] She makes costly sacrifices, even over time with people, even over a better future, because she desires to please her commanding officer. The athlete gets tested from time to time.
- Someone might say, why bother putting yourself through that? All roads lead to Rome. One crown is as good as another. Stop punishing yourself.
- But he knows the truth. There's only one path, one destination. And getting sidetracked, taking a shortcut, giving up, won't get him there.
- And finally, the hardworking farmer will share with Christ in his glory. Yes, the work is hard. But like Paul says in Romans 8, 17, If we are God's children, then we are his heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in his glory.
- Soldiers of Christ suffer. But Paul calls them, challenges them. Endure. Endure for the gospel.
- [16 : 10] And it's a big ask, isn't it? It's a lot to cop. I wonder if you're feeling it. So Paul continues by encouraging Timothy in two ways to look or to think beyond himself in his own suffering.
- Listen from verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel for which I'm suffering. Even to the point of being chained like a criminal.
- But God's word is not chained. Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Jesus Christ with eternal glory.
- Paul moves on with a word of encouragement. Remember the gospel. My gospel, he calls it. Meaning, the gospel I proclaim. Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.
- Very similar to what we heard the angels declare about Jesus to the shepherds. Yet Paul has seen Jesus raised from the dead. Remember this gospel, Timothy, and remember it.
- [17 : 26] Even if I'm being chained like a criminal. Why? Because I may be chained. But God's word is not chained. That's the first encouragement and reminder to look beyond himself in suffering.
- Because you might be stopped. But God's word is never stopped. Secondly, Paul says, I endure everything.
- Now it might sound a bit like Paul is flexing. I can handle anything. But really he's challenging Timothy to think hard about this.
- Why would you suffer everything even being chained? Well, Paul is continuing to speak in themes that he has been so far.
- Last week it was, I'm convinced that God is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day. And now it's, I endure everything for the sake of the elect for their salvation.

[18 : 33] Why would Paul and Timothy keep working for their commanding officer, knowing that shame, ridicule, desertion, and imprisonment may be on the cards?

Why would they endure for that? Well, Paul says it is for their sake. For the sake of the elect.

Who are the elect? Well, we were introduced to this idea in last week's passage. Do you remember Paul talking about the grace given before creation?

The elect are those whom God has chosen for salvation, even before they decided to put their trust in him. Election is a wonderful comfort because it reminds us that our relationship with God depends on his power more than it does ours.

And now someone might say, well, if God has chosen, then I don't need to do anything, either for me or for anyone else. But just listen to Paul.

[19 : 45] Consider his words and attitude. He says, I endure all things, prison, desertion, all kinds of suffering, for their sake, the elect, so they may obtain salvation.

Not, I will wait. I will sit on my hands. If they're elect, what can I do? No, he knows that his commanding officer, his master, his saviour, is far better than anything the world has to offer.

And he's desperate, therefore, to get them in. And so he will endure anything. Anything for the gospel. Anything for the elect.

Anything for their salvation. Anything for the gospel. So what will you endure? Will you endure for the gospel?

Well, Paul finishes with a more personal challenge. A challenge to apply our faith. Yes, Paul has been talking to a leader of a church and to a leader considering raising leaders.

[21 : 07] But there is a ministry among the body which is appropriate and necessary for all who believe. There is a suffering for the faith in the gospel which is appropriate and necessary for all who believe.

And so to finish, we're going to reflect briefly on the end of the passage, which is a bit like a gospel poem with both a challenge in responding to what Christ has done and a warning for us all.

Have a look from verse 11. Here is a trustworthy saying. If we died with him, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him.

If we disown him, he will also disown us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot disown himself. He begins with a great comfort for those who are with Christ if we died with him.

Obviously not speaking about physical death, but about those who are united with Christ in his death. Paul says in Romans 6 on the slide, we are those who have died to sin.

[22 : 21] And then again in Colossians 3, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. And if we died with him, we will also live with him.

He goes on in Romans 6, if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him because we know that Christ was raised from the dead.

He cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him. A great comfort for those who are in Christ, those who trust in Christ, who believe in Jesus.

If we died with him, we will live with him. And at the same time, it's a great challenge, isn't it, for those who are yet to be in Jesus, who are yet to believe in him.

Last week, we kept hearing about the wonderful gospel, just as we have this week. And so there is a challenge again. Have you believed it yet?

[23 : 24] Are you with Christ yet? Paul goes on more specifically to the believers, if we endure, we will reign with him.

That's a really special promise, isn't it? And Paul isn't joking. Even Peter agrees when speaking about both leaders and all believers. He says to the elders among you, who also will share in the sufferings to be revealed, be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care.

And, dear friends, rejoice as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. Friends, the challenge has been laid out.

Yes, there is a steep climb ahead, both for those in leadership and for all believers. We ought to be focused, faithful, undivided gospel workers.

Endure for the gospel. Now, it may not be your job to train gospel workers. That's not everyone's job, not every Christian's job.

[24 : 43] But it is your job as a believer to please your commanding officer, the Lord Jesus. It is your job to remain undistracted by civilian affairs.

What are yours, I wonder? It is your job to endure for the elect, for the sake of the people who are in this room.

How? Well, simply by turning up, coming to church, to Bible study, a warm greeting, an encouraging conversation, even when life is full, so that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Paul follows this with a warning. If we disown him, he will disown us. It makes sense and reminds us suddenly that God's patience and mercy, while amazing and wonderful, are not unlimited.

And like the previous, Paul isn't joking. Jesus says the same thing to his disciples, not as a threat, but to challenge how we hold ourselves to the world.

[26 : 16] When we suffer, when we have divided loyalties, when we are tempted by new directions and destinations, our opportunity will to be either acknowledge Jesus or ignore him.

And he plainly says in Matthew chapter 10, whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. And when you begin to suffer for the gospel, will you endure or will you disown?

Paul finishes with a funny one. If we are faithless, he remains faithful because he cannot disown himself. I call this funny because I'm pretty sure I've never disowned Jesus, but my capacity for faithlessness is high.

I am fallible. I am weak, vulnerable, but he is perfect. His faithfulness never fails.

And did you notice it says he cannot disown himself. We who believe are in him, one with him. What he inherits as the son of the father, we are included in as the elect.

[27 : 47] We will receive not because of us, but because of him, because of election. And as we heard, the elect not lazy, but active.

And so we take Paul's challenge, don't we? In light of these warnings, in light of these encouragements, be strong in the grace that is in Christ.

Endure suffering. Endure for the gospel as faithful workers for the sake of the salvation of the elect. How about I pray that we would do this?

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the grace that you have given us in Christ Jesus. Help us to be strong in it.

Help us, Father, to endure suffering like good soldiers of Christ. And would you make us focused, devoted, and undivided that we might endure everything for the sake of the elect, that we, that they, may obtain salvation in Christ.

[28 : 59] Amen. Amen.