

2 Timothy 2:8-13
Follow and Endure

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, **9** for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. **10** Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11 Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,
we will also live with him;

12

if we endure,
we will also reign with him.

If we disown him,
he will also disown us;

13

if we are faithless,
he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.

Intro: Endurance

Good morning, it's good to see you all here today.

Endurance. This is what we're considering today. Endurance. What is it, what does it look like? Is it worth it? What does it take to endure?

Well I'm sure you've got a few examples in your own life of endurance, but I'll share with you one of mine to help us all think about what endurance can look like.

This story begins a few years back. My wife, Laura, has four older brothers and one day we all went out on a kayaking trip, Laura's brothers, me and Laura's Dad, Phil. We made the long trip out to the Clarence River early one morning, to a point about half an hour south of Tabulam, kind of in the middle of nowhere.

We put the kayaks in and the first few kilometres were fantastic, beautiful landscapes, glassy water, small sections of white water rapids, beautiful bird life everywhere. But before we knew it, we reached a point where the river split into about 50 different narrow channels, too narrow to kayak down. We had to get out and start dragging the kayaks through. We all hoped that this would last just a short while and so we endured, but it kept on going. For hours we dragged our kayaks through these narrow channels, hunched over beneath the bottlebrush trees, trying not to roll an ankle on the cobbled bed of the Clarence.

After hours of enduring the frustration of dragging a kayak down a river on foot, the sun was starting to get low in the sky and we decided to call it quits on the kayaking and start looking for another way out. We dragged the kayaks up onto the bank and started trekking through cow paddocks in search of a road. We found a farm track and figured we could follow it to a road.

One of us, either me or Phil, had left our shoes at the car and the farm track was surfaced with some sort of sharp granite gravel, so every few hundred metres me and Phil would swap a pair of thongs between us to give our feet some relief. When you didn't have the thongs on you longed for the time when the other would say, alright, I think it's your turn now. But in the meantime you had to endure the pain.

The sun set and the night began to get cool. Every hill top was a little bit warmer and every gully felt cold. The stars were out and although we had been walking for hours, we were starting to shiver. Our wet board shorts had been chafing for hours, both me and Phil I'm sure felt like our feet had become like those little tenderised barbecue steaks you get at Woolies and we had no idea when we would reach the road or how much further we would then have to walk to reach the car.

We had endured dragging kayaks down the Clarence, we were enduring the long walk down the farm track, we endured the cold, wet, chafing shorts. We endured all of it because we knew it would be worth

it. It would be worth it to get back to the car. To grab a towel from the boot, hop in and turn on the heater. It would be worth it to make it home and enjoy a hot meal and bed. It would be worth it to avoid being left out in the cold, shivering in a dark, cold cow paddock in the middle of nowhere.

This is one story of endurance. Perhaps you've got a good one too. But what we're reading here in 2 Timothy 2 today should get us all thinking about endurance, what it looks like. Is it easy? Is it hard? Is it worth it? Before we dig deeper, let's pray.

1. Eternal Glory

We're going to work through this passage a little bit back to front. Or perhaps you could say inside out. Because, you will see, we need to understand the goal of Paul's exhortation in order to better understand the detail. Paul has started chapter 2 with various analogies of hard work and suffering for the sake of achieving a goal. He encourages Timothy to join with him in suffering like a good soldier and also uses the image of an athlete and a hard working farmer.

All of these are working and suffering, enduring, towards a worthy goal. And what we see in verse 10 is what that goal is for Paul.

Verse 10,

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Paul's goal, the battle he is fighting, is to help the elect to obtain salvation in Christ with eternal glory.

Now, when he says elect, what he means is, those who God has chosen, who by the work of His Spirit have put their trust in Jesus and will endure in faith until they live with Jesus for eternity in heaven. We'll dig into that a little deeper in a minute, but first let's look at this goal of Paul's.

His goal is to help the elect, not merely to believe the gospel, but that they would obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. With eternal glory. This is the significant part of his goal. Eternal glory.

You see, we are all aware that there are people who believe the gospel for a time, but then give up and turn away from Christ. Whether it is a slow and gradual fade or a fast, fleeting belief like a flash in the pan, there are a variety of ways that people can come to believe the good news of Jesus and yet forget him, leave him behind later.

Jesus himself explains this phenomenon in Matthew 13 when he tells the parable of the sower, who scatters seed on the path, among the rocks, among the weeds and on the good soil. Some people, like the

seed in the rocks or the weeds, may celebrate the good news of Jesus for a time, but then soon fall away when trouble or persecution or the deceitfulness of wealth or the worries of life come and overwhelm them.

New Testament writers also warn against this sort of short-lived trust in Jesus, with the writer of Hebrews saying in chapter 3,

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.

Paul's ultimate goal is not just to help people believe the good news of Jesus. Paul's goal is to help them to endure in faith to the end, to obtain the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory.

In order to reach that, the elect, like Paul, must endure. God's chosen people, the elect, are revealed by their endurance in faith.

2. Endure

Now as Paul continues in verses 11, 12 and 13, he only mentions endurance once, but you will see that his whole exhortation is about endurance.

Verse 11,

Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him, we will also live with him;

What does it mean to die with Christ? Jesus says to his followers, if anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily. Paul writes to the church of the Galatians, *those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*. And he writes similarly to the church of the Colossians, *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry*.

Dying with Christ means crucifying the old self, our sinful flesh that is selfish and driven by passions and desires. But instead to take up your cross daily, following Jesus, enduring pain and suffering for the sake of others. If we die with him, we will also live with him, in eternal glory. And we see this life guaranteed at the cross of Jesus.

You see, there were two criminals who hung beside Jesus on crosses when Jesus was crucified. And one of them realised who Jesus truly was, asking Jesus, *'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.'* And Jesus replied, *'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'*

If we die with him, we will also live with him. Jesus himself guarantees it. But for most of us it won't be a last minute moment of repentance. It will be an endurance race.

Paul continues in verse 12 of 2 Timothy chapter 2:

if we endure, we will also reign with him.

What does it look like to endure and reign? Well Jesus sets this out to his disciples as he shares with them his last supper before he is crucified. His disciples are getting excited about Jesus becoming king because they can feel that the time is getting close. They are arguing about which of them will be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom. But Jesus flips their expectations upside down, saying, *'the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.'*

To endure is to serve. And not just to serve but to treat others as better than ourselves. The greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who rules like the one who serves.

And with this encouragement Jesus reminds them that enduring with him in faith will ultimately mean that they will reign with him, saying,

*You are those who have stood by me in my trials. **29** And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, **30** so that you may*

eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

This is what it looks like to endure with Jesus until we reign with him in eternal glory. Sitting on thrones in his kingdom as judges over the tribes of Israel.

Paul continues verse 12 of 2 Timothy,

If we disown him, he will also disown us;

What does it mean to disown Christ? Well it's not quite as simple as it might sound. Have a listen to what happens to Jesus soon after the last supper,

*While Jesus was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve (disciples), was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, **48** but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"*

For Judas, disowning Jesus was a hidden and secret sin. He treated Jesus as if he still loved him, but his heart was set on wealth. He agreed to betray Jesus for money, but he didn't have the heart to show everyone his true self. He pretended to love Jesus while secretly loving money. This reminds us of Jesus' parable of the sower. There are a variety of ways that we can be drawn away from trust in Jesus. Guard

your own heart, that the deceitfulness of wealth doesn't drag you away as well.

And finally, let's look at verse 13 of 2 Timothy 2,

if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

What does it mean to be faithless? It is failing to endure in faith. It is one thing to hear the gospel and accept it with joy like the seed scattered among the rocks and the weeds, germinating and growing for a time. It is another thing to continue in faith, to endure the hills and gullies of life as a follower of Jesus. To battle against the passions and desires of the sinful flesh and to daily take up your cross and endure in following Jesus. To fight against fear when it feels like the odds are against us and to continually, daily, put your trust in Jesus, knowing that he is faithful to the end.

And we see what this looks like in reading what happens to Jesus as he heads for the cross. Jesus is betrayed by Judas, a man who pretended to be his friend but sold his life for a few silver coins. Peter had lost faith, denying Jesus three times while Jesus was on trial before Pilate. The disciples had lost faith, with a large crowd of them following Jesus to the cross, crying and mourning and wailing for him. The crowds had shouted 'crucify him!' It seemed like there wasn't a person in the

world who still believed that Jesus could be the son of God, the reigning king of kings.

But it was in this moment that God showed his unflinching faithfulness to his promises, to us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Through Jesus' death God showed his faithfulness to us and shows us what it looks like to endure to the end.

This is what endurance looks like. That Jesus would give up his place at the Father's side in heaven and become like a servant to us. And not just a servant, but that he would die for us. Jesus endured suffering and death like none of us will ever have to bear. And he did it for our sake. For the sake of the elect. This is how God shows his faithfulness, even while we were faithless.

And God did not disown him, for he cannot disown himself, but exalted him to the highest place by raising him to life to reign as king from heaven, the name above all names. Jesus.

Jesus has given us everything we need to endure in faith in him and he has fulfilled his faithfulness to us. Have a listen to how Jesus addresses his disciples when he appears to them after his resurrection,

*He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"*

Jesus' own life was a life of endurance until the end, to reach eternal glory. And we have everything we need in the Bible, in what the prophets had foretold of what Jesus would do, to show us why we can have complete faith in Him. And this is what Paul's goal is for us too,

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

So what does this mean for us?

We need to endure in faith. We must not wither and turn aside from the truth. This is the purpose of Paul's exhortation to Timothy, to encourage endurance for the sake of the elect, that we can obtain salvation and eternal glory.

But endurance is hard. Life can be hard. Following and trusting in Jesus can be really hard.

Dragging a kayak down a river for a few hours pales in comparison to standing firm in faith in Jesus for a lifetime. As Jesus shows us in the parable of the sower, there are many ways that we can be drawn away from enduring in faith in Him. The worries and anxieties of life can draw us away. The deceitfulness of wealth can draw us away. Trouble and persecution and fear can draw us away. Which of these is making it hard for you to continue in following Jesus? Guard your heart. Endure in faith in Jesus. It will be worth it.

And to this end, Paul's encouragement is simple. Remember.

3. Remember

Verse 8, Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel

Paul encourages Timothy to remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, reigning king, conqueror of sin and death. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, *Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith,*

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

If we are to endure in faith in Jesus, we need to set our hearts and minds on him. If I had to distil the message of all of Paul's second letter to Timothy, I would nearly have to say it is this. Remember Jesus.

Remember him, consider him, teach each other about him, do not be ashamed of him. It's all about Jesus. He is our saviour. He is our king. He has made a way for us to live with him for eternity and he has trodden the path before us.

He knows our sin, he knows our guilt, he knows our desires and passions and weaknesses and fears and he has dealt with all of them at the cross. He is interceding for us at the Father's side, making our case

before God the Father, the ruler and judge over all, saying Father forgive them. Because all of our sin and guilt has been taken away by Jesus at the cross.

Remember him. Remember Jesus. This is all you need to know.

Remember Jesus.

But it's not always easy is it. And this is why Paul writes to Timothy about endurance, about fighting the good fight and running the race. If we are going to endure, we need to not just remember Jesus, but remind each other of Him as well. The writer of Hebrews warns,

*See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. **14** We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.*

We need to encourage each other daily to continue following Jesus, so that together we can hold onto the conviction that he is the only way to salvation with eternal glory and hold that firmly to the end.

To this end I want to encourage you in 3 simple things you can do. 3 ways that you can help yourself and others to endure in faith.

First, read your Bible every day. If you want to remember Jesus, the most straight-forward way will be to read about Him. If you feel relatively

young in your faith, or maybe you're struggling to connect with Jesus, just read one of the gospels. See Jesus, who he is, what he teaches. Get to know him. Remember Jesus. Read about Him. If you struggle with reading your Bible, tell someone. Ask for help. Find someone to read the Bible with you. And this brings us to the second encouragement.

Read the Bible with brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not just for people who are struggling to read the Bible by themselves. This is for everyone. Walking the path of faith is hard. But it's easier when you've got others to walk with. It's better when someone shares their thongs with you when you're doing it tough on the sharp gravel. Read the Bible together and encourage each other. Read the Bible together and address sin in each other's lives. Guard against the deceitfulness of sin and the worries of life by sharing in Christ.

And the third encouragement from today is to read the Bible with people who don't know Jesus. This is for everyone as well. If you are going to endure in faith in Jesus, you need to remember him by reading the Bible. If we are going to encourage each other and guard against sin, we need to remember Jesus by reading the Bible together.

And if we are going to help others to put their trust in Jesus and endure in faith, we need to read the Bible with them. We need to show them the goal, the future of salvation in Jesus, eternal glory with him. We

need to show them where we are headed and why they should join us on the path. We need to show them that it's worth it, that there is something worth enduring for, something better than a dry towel and a car heater. It's really quite simple. Read the Bible with people who don't know Jesus so that they can see the joy of salvation in Christ and the guarantee of life with him, with eternal glory in his kingdom.

Consider your own life. How did you come to trust in Jesus? Did you randomly pick up a Bible and start reading? Or did someone read with you, read to you, teach you?

If we don't read the Bible with others, how can they ever come to know Jesus? So let's do it. Remember Jesus. God's word is not chained, it is free and we should share it around.

Let's pray.