

Jesus Is Worth It
Part #6 - “Unsinkable Buoyancy”
Text | 2 Timothy 2:3-13

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on June 16, 2019

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** The apostle Paul was a remarkable man. He faced a lot of difficulty in his life and yet there was a tremendous buoyancy to him. Do you know what I mean by that? Buoyancy is the ability to stay afloat in water and not sink. If you take a basketball and try to push it under the water it will push back against you and burst back to the surface. You cannot hold it under forever.
 - Paul had tremendous buoyancy. He gave his life to serve Jesus but in doing so faced many difficulties that tried to sink him. Five times he was flogged. Three times he was beaten with rods. He was stoned. People within the church discredited him, slandered him, and tried to undo his teaching. The Romans kept putting him in prison.
 - And yet Paul never stays under. He keeps popping back up. So what gave him this unsinkable buoyancy?
- This is an extremely relevant issue today. Everywhere people are looking for that secret that will enable them to deal with the difficulties of life. Why else do you think self-help books are such huge sellers? Why do people meditate or try out Buddhism?
 - It is because they looking for something that will give them a buoyancy that overcomes the pressures of life that keep pushing them under.
- Christians are not exempt from this. Although following Jesus is a great delight, it is not easy.
 - How do you deal with the opposition you face for being a Christian?
 - How do you deal with your own failings and sins, which can at times feel overwhelming?
 - How do you keep serving when it gets exhausting to do so?
 - How do you keep from sinking into discouragement when you feel like you are so ineffective for Jesus?
- Timothy was feeling this kind of pressure. He was being tempted to quit and retreat to his own comfort. But throughout chapters 1 and 2 Paul calls him to persevere. Paul reminds him that following Jesus means facing difficulty. Like a good soldier he needs to endure hardship. Like an athlete he must take the pain that comes with the race. Like a farmer he must work with all his might.
 - Okay, so difficulty is normal. But now the question is, ***“where can we get a buoyancy that will enable us not to sink under these difficulties?”***
 - This is what Paul turns to now. Assuming that many things try to sink us, Paul outlines three things we must do to possess a buoyancy that can overcome all the pressures that seek to push us under.

CONTINUALLY REMEMBER THE VICTORY OF JESUS

- **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** First, in order to possess a buoyancy that can withstand all that tries to sink us we must continually remember the victory of Jesus.
 - Paul wastes no time in getting right to core of Christianity’s answer for how to overcome difficulties. Look at verse 8. ***READ 8 - Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.***

- So the big answer is to remember something. The verb tense is continuous which means we must continually remember something. No, not something. Someone. Timothy is to continually remember Jesus, the Christ.
 - But notice Paul states two things about Jesus that we are to constantly dwell on, namely, his resurrection and his lineage with David. These point to his victory as the risen Saviour and as the reigning King.
- Notice first that we are to **(SHOW SLIDE 3) continually remember his victory as the risen Saviour. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.”**
 - Now that is a bit odd don’t you think? If Paul were trying to encourage Timothy to endure hardship, wouldn’t you think that he would mention how Jesus endured his crucifixion? Well the crucifixion is implied here for when the Scriptures speak of Jesus rising it does so in the sense that Jesus has paid for our sins and his resurrection is the proof. The resurrection then points us to Jesus’ victory as our Saviour.
 - This is what we need to hear when we are sinking down. We need to hear that Jesus also sank. All of his enemies - sin, Satan, and death - pushed him down into utter darkness. They killed him. He lay dead on the bottom. But on the third day God raised him from the dead. And he rocketed up to the surface. He burst from grave.
 - This is how you get buoyancy. Since nothing can sink the risen Jesus, nothing can sink those who are his people.
- The French Philosopher Luc Ferry wrote a book called *A Brief History of Thought*. Ferry is no friend of Christianity and yet he argues convincingly that the reason why Christianity completely replaced all the Roman and Greek religions was because of it taught that every person, through Jesus, can have victory over death.
 - Ferry says **(SHOW SLIDE 4) “[Christianity is] the only version of salvation that enables us not only to transcend the fear of death, but also to beat death itself. . . . It seems to be the only version that offers a truly definitive victory of personal immortality over our condition as mortals.”¹**
 - Do you see it? If Jesus conquered everything that can sink you then putting all your trust in him is not only the logical thing to do – it is the wisest thing to do.
- Continually remember his victory as the risen Saviour. But then continually **(SHOW SLIDE 5) continually remember his victory as the reigning king.** Look again at verse 8. **READ 8 - Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.**
 - Note here that he writes, “Jesus Christ” not “Christ Jesus.” This is rare for Paul. He does this to emphasize Jesus’ humanity. “Christ” is the word for Messiah. In the Old Testament God promised that he would defeat all our enemies. But he said he would do this by sending human man, a Messiah, who would come from King David’s line and who would reign forever and ever.
 - So putting it all together Paul is saying, **“this man Jesus, he is God’s promised Messiah. He is the promised son of King David who will defeat our enemies and who reigns forever and ever.”**
- So do you need buoyancy? Are you sinking? Christianity makes this astounding offer to you, namely that if you will look to Jesus you will join in his victory.
 - Christian are you facing great difficulties in following Christ? Do not be discouraged. Look to Jesus. He is your buoyancy. He can enable you to endure hardship because he is the risen Saviour and the reigning King.
 - Continually remember the victory of Jesus.

¹ Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide for Living*, Kindle Edition, Location 1204.

FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS

- (SHOW SLIDE 6) Second, in order to possess a buoyancy that can withstand all that tries to sink us we must follow the example of faithful Christians.
 - Paul now seeks to provide buoyancy in Timothy's life by giving his own life as an example of one who endures hardship for Christ and his people. Example is a powerful motivator.
 - Look at verses 8b-10. **READ 8b-10 - as preached in my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**
- Back in 2:3 Paul had called Timothy **"share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."** But Paul is not calling Timothy to something that he would never do. We see in verse 9 that Paul is suffering. He is in jail because of his faith in Jesus and yet in verse 10 he says he **"endures everything."**
 - But notice that this endurance has a purpose. It is for **"for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."** Elect means "chosen ones." Paul believes in two things that people often pit against each other. First, he believes that God has chosen certain sinners out of humanity whom he will draw to himself and save. But second, he believes the way God draws these chosen ones is through the preaching of the gospel. So election and evangelism go together. It through the spoken word that God draws his elect to himself.
 - We see an example of this in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas go to Antioch. They speak the word of the Lord to the people and then in 13:48 it says, **"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed."** Election and evangelism are friends. This is why must tell people the gospel. It is the means by which God rescues sinners.
 - So Paul is saying, **"Timothy look at my example. For the sake the elect and their salvation I have faced all kinds of hardships. Follow my example!"**
- But there is one further thing. As Christians we can often be discouraged because our words don't seem to make a difference. We try telling people about Jesus but it just doesn't seem to do anything. But again, Paul says, "look at my life." He is in prison and unable to preach. He is not being effective. But look at how he encourages himself in verse 9.
 - He says he may be chained, **"But the word of God is not bound!"** We plant seeds where we can but we must never get discouraged for we never know how God will use the words that we have spoken.
- This makes me think of a man named Luke short who grew up in England. When he was 18 years old boy he happened to hear a sermon by a preacher named John Flavel. The sermon was about how Jesus came to save us from the curse of our sin and horror of dying under this curse. The sermon made no impression on him at all.
 - Shortly after this, Luke moved to New England in the United States and became a farmer. He farmed his whole life but had no interest in Jesus at all. Years passed. Decades passed. Still he cared nothing for Jesus.
 - Like our beloved Cliff Padgett, he was blessed with an exceptionally long life. When he was 103 years old he stopped to take a rest in his field and, as older people often do, started thinking back over his long life. Suddenly he remembered the sermon he had heard 85 years before. His heart was struck by his great need for Jesus to rescue him from the curse of his sin and right there he called on Jesus to save him.

- Luke Short lived 3 more years and devoted them to living for Jesus. The epitaph on his gravestone says this: **(SHOW SLIDE 7) “He lies a babe in grace, aged three years, who died according to nature, aged 106.”**²
- God’s word is not chained. Do not be discouraged that your words may seem to have no effect. Who can say what God will do with your words?
 - God says of his word, **“it will not return to me empty, it but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”**
 - **“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”**
- We gain buoyancy as we look at the example of faithful believers like Paul.
 - When you feel like retreating and just living for yourself they are an example devoting their lives to others.
 - When you do give your life to others but then find it hard and feel like quitting they are an example of enduring everything for the sake of the elect.
 - When you feel like your life is hardly counting for anything you can see how God has used their words and lives in ways they could not imagine.
 - In order to possess buoyancy that can withstand all that tries to sink us we must follow the example of faithful Christians.

ABSORB SPECIFIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

- **(SHOW SLIDE 8) Finally, in order to possess a buoyancy that can withstand all that tries to sink us we must breathe in specific Christian truths.**
 - The more air a ball has in it, the harder it is to sink. Paul is saying that we increase our buoyancy as we breathe in specific Christian truths. I say “specific Christian truths” because different truths are useful for different things.
 - You will notice that your Bible probably formats this paragraph like a poem. The reason for this is that Paul is likely quoting a well-known hymn. He says this common “saying”, this hymn, is trustworthy. He quotes it because the specific truths contained in it are useful for enabling Christians to endure, to gain that buoyancy we have been talking about.
- You will notice that there are four lines to the hymn. The first two lines contain truths that are meant to comfort and inspire us. The third line contains a truth that is meant to disturb and warn us. The final line contains truth that are, again, meant to comfort and inspire.
 - **READ 11-13** - ¹¹ *The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;* ¹² *if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;* ¹³ *if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*
- **(SHOW SLIDE 9) First, we gain buoyancy when we breathe in the comforting truth of our union with Jesus.**
 - Look again at line 1 in verse 11. **“If we died with him, we will also live with him.”** This is not referring to our future death. It is a death that has already happened. When a person becomes a Christian they die to their old life and are made alive with Jesus.
 - When you are sinking breathe in this truth: I am united to Jesus. This means you get what he gets. He died and you died. He was raised to life and so you have been given life. Breathe in this truth of being united to Jesus and you will say with Paul, **“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,** ³⁹ **nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be**

² John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*, 11. Phillip Ryken, *Galatians*, 266.

able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Do you see it? If you have Jesus you are ultimately unsinkable. Why? Because Jesus unsinkable and every Christian is united to him.

- **(SHOW SLIDE 10) Second, we gain buoyancy when we breathe in the comforting truth of the glorious eternity that awaits those who endure.**
 - Look at line 2 in verse 12. **READ 12a** – ***“if we endure, we will also reign with him.”*** Oh what comfort for the Christian when we feel like we are sinking down. We are to keep enduring because we will reign with him.
 - Breathe this in: there is a day coming when King Jesus will return and will set up his eternal reign on the earth. To our absolute astonishment he says he will share that reign with all his people who have endured in following him.
- During WW2 Winston Churchill was Prime Minister of Britain. When things looked dark and England was being bombed it was Churchill’s courage that kept the English going. After the war and near the end of his life, he was invited back to his alma mater to address the students.
 - He was only 5’5” but he was a bulldog of a man. Everyone waited breathlessly to see what he would say. It was the shortest speech anyone could remember but they would never forget what they heard. Churchill said, ***“Young gentlemen, never give up. Never give up. Never give up! Never! Never! Never!”*** With that he sat down.
 - ***“If we endure, we will also reign with him.”***
- **(SHOW SLIDE 11) Third, we gain buoyancy when we breathe in the disturbing truth of what happens to those who do not endure.**
 - Look at line 3 of the hymn in verse 12. **READ 12b** – ***if we deny him, he also will deny us.*** This does not refer to a temporary weakness of faith like when Peter disowned Jesus. It refers to a permanent and settled disposition. It is the opposite of endurance. It is the person who does not want to share in Christ and the difficulties that come with serving him. They have consciously rejected him. It is not a one-time sin. It is a hardened and determined rejection of Jesus.
 - People can disown Jesus by their words. 1 John 2:22 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 12) *“Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. . . . No one who denies the Son has the Father.”*** People can also disown him with their actions for as Titus 1:16 speaks about people who **(SHOW SLIDE 13) *“claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.”*** They disregard what God says and live how they want to live.
 - Examine yourself: do your words and actions affirm that you love Christ or do they show that you disown him?
 - And then we read these terrifying words that if we deny him, he will deny us on judgement day. I cannot think of anything worse than this. To stand before God Almighty and have him say, ***“I don’t know you. Away from me.”***
 - This is a warning to us. Warnings also give us strength. If you are treading water and are starting to fail you can gain strength by thinking about will happen if you quit. We must endure therefore because ***“if we deny him, he also will deny us.”***
- Despite this one warning the hymn returns to comfort in the final line. **(SHOW SLIDE 14) Finally, we gain buoyancy when we breathe in the comforting truth of Christ’s faithfulness to sometimes faithless Christians.**
 - **READ 13b** - ***if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*** This line corrects a possible misunderstanding from line 3. This word “faithless” is not as strong as the previous “deny.” It refers to being sometimes faithless. Peter is the classic example here. In a

moment of weakness, he denied knowing Christ but then wept in repentance over what he had done.

- Christians can often sink deep in their discouragement over their sins. Under pressure we often fail. We waver. We wobble. Our faith is weak. In moments like this we need to focus not on the fact that we are unfaithful but on the fact that Christ is faithful.
- There is a big difference between this and line 3. One commentator writes, **(SHOW SLIDE 15)** *“There is a world of difference between being blown off the ship’s deck by a hurricane and voluntarily diving into the sea to avoid having to stay at the helm.”*³
 - The third line is about people willfully disowning Christ. The fourth line is about Christians who, to their own regret, falter and faint under pressure. They feel discouraged and start to sink. Oh but breathe in this specific truth: Jesus is faithful even when you are faithless.

CONCLUSION

- So there you have it. Christianity offers the buoyancy that we are all searching. This buoyancy is found as we apply the victory of Jesus to our lives, as we follow the example of faithful Christians, and as we absorb these specific truths.

³ N.T. Wright, *Paul For Everyone: I & II Timothy and Titus*, 104.