

Title: Lesson 7: Focus is Everything When You Suffer

Text: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Have you ever noticed how much difference focus makes in life?

A blurry camera lens leaves the picture distorted.

A distracted driver causes accidents.

A runner who looks at the crowd instead of the finish line stumbles.

Focus is everything!

The same is true when it comes to suffering—if your eyes are on the wrong thing, you'll be crushed.

But if your focus is on Christ, you can endure.

"If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at God, you'll be at rest."— Corrie Ten Boom, *Each New Day* (1977 devotional)

When Paul writes this letter, he's not sitting comfortably at a desk—he's in a dark Roman dungeon, chained like a dangerous criminal.

This is his second imprisonment, during Nero's brutal crackdown on Christians after the Great Fire of Rome.

And Paul knows this time there will be no release—his execution is near.

Yet notice what Paul chooses to focus on.

Not the cold cell.

Not the chains.

Not the injustice.

He fixes his eyes on Jesus Christ—risen, reigning, and unstoppable—and he reminds Timothy that though he is bound, the Word of God is not bound.

And that's the focus Paul calls us to share when suffering presses in, we must fix our eyes on Jesus—not just to endure it, but to rejoice in it—because when suffering comes, the only way forward is to focus on what Christ has already done.

Main Idea: When suffering comes, focus on what Christ has done!

We need this truth because suffering is inevitable.

But where you set your focus will determine whether you faint or whether you finish.

So where should our focus be when suffering comes?

Paul answers that question by pointing us first to Christ Himself.

1. Focus on Jesus When You Suffer (vv. 8–9)

In the previous passage Paul tells Timothy to think.

2 Timothy 2:7 ESV

Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

He follows that verse up with verse 8.

2 Timothy 2:8 ESV

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

Think! Remember! Actively engage your minds in important and substantial areas of truth.

Paul wants Timothy to **REMEMBER** some of the most important truths one could ever ponder on.

Jesus Christ — The Person of the Gospel

Remember that at the center of Paul's gospel is not a philosophy, a moral code, or even a religious experience—it's a **Person**.

Jesus Christ is the heart of the good news.

He is fully God and fully man, the only Mediator who can reconcile sinners to God.

To forget Jesus is to empty the gospel of its power, but to remember Him is to anchor our faith in the One who saves.

The resurrection guarantees our hope ([1 Cor. 15:17–20](#)).

1 Corinthians 15:17–20 ESV

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The Resurrection — The Power of the Gospel

The resurrection is the decisive proof that Jesus truly is who He claimed to be.

Death could not hold Him; the grave could not keep Him.

His resurrection is both the foundation of our hope and the fuel for our endurance.

Because He lives, our faith is not in vain, our suffering is not wasted, and our future is secure.

The risen Christ guarantees new life now and eternal life to come.

The King — The Promise of the Gospel

As the “*offspring of David*,” Jesus is the rightful King who fulfills God’s covenant promises.

He is not just risen; He reigns.

His throne assures us that history is not spinning out of control.

Even when suffering rages, Christ is ruling, and every tear and trial are under His authority.

One day His reign will be visible to all, but even now His kingship means we can endure, knowing our lives are held in the hand of the sovereign King.

Jesus’ kingship proves God keeps His promises ([2 Sam. 7:16](#)).

2 Samuel 7:16 ESV

¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ”

These three are crucial components of the Gospel!

This is the message Paul preached.

This is the Good News - explain the gospel...

Timothy dare not forget these things because, as I told you a few weeks ago, the gospel’s power is possible when the whole of the gospel is preached.

Parts of the Gospel preached as the whole Gospel is powerless.

But there is another very important concept you and I must understand when it comes to the gospel.

Suffering is often an inevitable response.

Look also at verse 9...

2 Timothy 2:8–9 ESV

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

Paul is experiencing what God promised would happen to him.

Acts 9:14–16 ESV

*And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must **suffer** for the sake of my name.”*

Honestly, I don't think this suffering was reserved just for Paul.

Jesus was clear to his disciples how people would treat them because of Him.

Matthew 5:10–11 ESV

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Matthew 10:22 ESV

²² and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

John 15:18–20 ESV

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

Luke 21:16–17 ESV

¹⁶ You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all for my name’s sake.

These are not some vague predictions, they are promises from Jesus Himself!

Promises of suffering for those who live out their faith in the public sector.

You might lose your job.

You might forfeit friends.

You might face ridicule from family.

You might be canceled or mocked for standing on God’s Word.

You might be passed over for a promotion or lose opportunities because of your convictions.

You might be pressured to stay silent when you should speak.

You might even face hostility or violence for naming the name of Christ.

But Jesus promised these things not to discourage us, but to prepare us—so we wouldn't be surprised when they come, and so we would keep our eyes on Him.

Paul is literally sitting in prison for preaching the gospel.

He is awaiting his execution because he boldly, lovingly, proclaimed Jesus Christ crucified, resurrected and coming again to rule and reign on this earth!

You must remember something profound.

Though Paul is chained, God's Word is not.

Charles Spurgeon said...

"The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend it. Let it loose. It will defend itself." - Charles Spurgeon

Paul may be in chains, but the gospel is roaring across the world.

- When suffering presses in, will you keep your eyes on your Risen Savior instead of your present circumstances?
- When opposition comes, will you remember that Jesus promised it, not to discourage you, but to prepare you?
- When the world tries to chain the messenger, will you trust that God's Word can never be chained?

When suffering comes, the first place to focus is Jesus—risen, reigning, and unstoppable.

But Paul doesn't stop there. He also focuses outward, on the salvation of others.

2. Focus on Your Disciples as You Suffer for Jesus (v. 10)

2 Timothy 2:10 ESV

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

I have been in the birthing room for all three of our children's arrival into this world.

Amazing, powerful, and miraculous.

My wife was particularly amazing.

No drugs, no epidural, she just hunkered down and birthed those babies.

Impressive to say the least.

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Now, it was not a party or a walk in the park by any means.

There was great pain and suffering in the process.

But when she held that little one, it was all worth the pain, suffering, and tears.

While it is not a perfect analogy, this is how Paul felt regarding bringing people into a saving relationship with Jesus and making disciples out of them.

Paul alludes to this in his letter to the church in Galatia...

Galatians 4:18–19 ESV

It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

Paul felt a personal responsibility for those he brought to Christ and helped to grow in Christ.

Paul felt the weight of his responsibility.

Colossians 1:28–29 ESV

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

And now, as he sits in prison, he is fine with his lot...

“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect...”

Do you see why Paul is fine with his situation?

He is fine with his situation because he has an eternal perspective in life.

He sees that there is more to life than his current situation.

He knows that there are people who God will, without question, save and convert into Children of Light!

And Paul is willing to put up with whatever is necessary to be a part of that process.

This is why he says *“I’ll put up with anything and everything if it enables the elect (current and future followers of Jesus) to come to faith in Christ.”*

Now this is an important point, isn’t it.

Sometimes Christians sit back and lean upon the doctrine of election (that God will save who He will save) as an excuse to NOT participate in the evangelistic process.

Maybe that is you here this morning?

“God will get them into the Kingdom in His time and in His way.”

His time and His way is using **YOU**, Christian!

Paul understood this and thanked God that he was part of the process whether He was out preaching the gospel to crowds, doing one on one bible studies, or sitting in a dark prison cell writing letters to his disciples.

He didn't care.

What he did care about is being part of God's glorious process of rescue.

2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

So whether they were already saved or yet to be saved, Paul was willing to do whatever was necessary, including suffering, to help people **know** Jesus and **grow** in Jesus.

Suffering is part of God's redemptive plan to spread the gospel ([Col. 1:24](#)).

Colossians 1:24 ESV

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

Endurance isn't only about us; it's about others who will be saved.

Adoniram Judson, the first American missionary to Burma, knew the price of following Christ.

He buried two wives and several children in the Burmese soil.

He was thrown into a foul prison, shackled in irons, beaten, and nearly starved as his wife Ann walked miles each day to plead for his life.

After her death, Judson battled such deep despair that he dug his own grave and sat beside it, waiting for death.

Yet he pressed on, translating the entire Bible into Burmese and laboring nearly four decades so that unreached people might hear the gospel.

By the time he died, there were more than 100 churches and 8,000 Burmese believers.

Like Paul, Judson endured everything for the sake of the elect, “that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10).

- Are you more concerned about your comfort... or someone else’s eternity?
- Are you willing to endure a little rejection... if it means someone might hear the gospel?
- When you suffer, do you see only the pain... or do you see the eternal reward God is working through it?
- Are you satisfied with people simply knowing about Jesus... or are you laboring until Christ is formed in them?
- Will you pray, “*Lord, don’t waste my suffering—use it to bring others to salvation*”?

So church, let’s stop clinging to comfort and start embracing sacrifice, because someone’s eternity may depend on our willingness to **endure** for the sake of Christ.

Review:

So far, Paul says: when you suffer, focus on Jesus—and focus on the salvation of others.

But there’s one more focus point: Christ’s faithfulness, which never fails.

3: Focus on the Faithfulness of Jesus While You Suffer (vv. 11–13)

2 Timothy 2:11–13 ESV

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.

Paul introduces this section with what he calls a “*trustworthy saying.*”

Whenever Paul says, “*The saying is trustworthy,*” he is underlining a bedrock truth you can build your life on.

He uses it five times in the Pastoral Epistles: to remind us that Christ came into the world to save sinners ([1 Tim. 1:15](#)),

...that aspiring to shepherd God’s people is a noble task ([1 Tim. 3:1](#)),

...that godliness holds value now and forever ([1 Tim. 4:9](#)),

...that suffering with Christ leads to life with Him ([2 Tim. 2:11](#)),

...that genuine faith must overflow in good works ([Titus 3:8](#)).

In other words, whenever you see that phrase, Paul is waving a flag and saying, “*Don’t miss this—this is the core of the Christian life.*”

And he says it here in verse 11.

Verses 11-13 contain what is probably a hymn or confession the early church knew well, maybe even used in baptism services.

It's built on four couplets.

The first is positive: *"If we died with Him, we will also live with Him."*

Paul isn't talking about martyrdom here but about our identification with Christ.

Romans 6:1-5 ESV

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Just as [Romans 6](#) reminds us, baptism pictures our union with Christ's death and resurrection—we died with Him, and we live with Him.

The second is also positive: *"If we endure, we will also reign with Him."*

That's the contrast—suffering now, glory later.

Just as Christ endured and now reigns, so those who faithfully endure will share in His reign. Can you believe that?

The third is sobering: *"If we deny Him, He will also deny us."*

That's a warning against apostasy—those who outwardly profess Christ for a time but then finally reject Him. Jesus Himself said...

Matthew 10:33 ESV

³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

The fourth is comforting: *"If we are faithless, He remains faithful."*

This isn't talking about apostates but about genuine believers who falter in weakness.

Even when we stumble, He does not disown His own.

He cannot deny Himself.

Once you're a true child of God, that can't be undone.

His faithfulness to His people never wavers.

And Paul's point is clear: Timothy needed to hear this, and so do we.

When you suffer, focus on the faithfulness of Jesus—because He always keeps His promises.
(Restated from the BKC)

Jesus promises life to those who die with Him ([Rom. 6:8](#)).

Romans 6:8 ESV

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Jesus promises a crown to those who endure ([Rev. 2:10](#)).

Revelation 2:10 ESV

¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Jesus warns of denial for those who reject Him ([Matt. 10:33](#), [Luke 12:9](#)).

Luke 12:9 ESV

⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

Jesus assures us that even when we are weak, He is faithful ([1 Thess. 5:24](#)).

1 Thessalonians 5:24 ESV

²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Picture Abraham under the starry sky as God calls him to a covenant.

The animals are cut in two and laid in place, the solemn path of blood stretched out before him.

Normally, both parties would walk through together, each pledging to keep the covenant on pain of death.

But in [Genesis 15](#), Abraham never takes a step.

Instead, God alone passes through as a smoking fire pot and flaming torch.

The message is crystal clear: the covenant depends not on Abraham's frailty, but on God's faithfulness.

And that's our hope too. When we are weak, when suffering tempts us to quit, we cling to the greater covenant-keeper—Jesus Christ—who cannot deny Himself.

His faithfulness holds us fast, even when ours wavers.

- When suffering feels overwhelming, will you remember that Jesus already secured your victory and life with Him?

- When your faith feels weak, will you rest in the truth that His faithfulness never wavers, even when yours does?
- When fear whispers that following Christ costs too much, will you look ahead to the crown of life He has promised?
- When you stumble and fall, will you run to the Savior who restores rather than rejects His children?
- When you feel like quitting, will you anchor your hope in the One who cannot deny Himself and will never let you go?

Review:

So when your faith falters, fix your eyes on Jesus—because His faithfulness will hold you fast until the end.

Conclusion

When suffering comes, don't let your focus drift.

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Invest your life in people. Rest in His faithfulness.

There is a beautiful song written a long time ago that speaks to this reality.

“Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus” was written in 1918 by Helen Howarth Lemmel after she read a line in a missionary's tract that said, *“Turn your soul's vision to Jesus, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim.”*

Those words gripped her heart, and almost immediately the chorus and verses flowed from her pen.

The hymn reminds us that when we fix our eyes on Christ, everything else fades into its proper place and we find strength, comfort, and hope in Him.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in his wonderful face.

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim.

In the light of His glory and grace.

Someone once said,

“If Christ is not risen, nothing else matters. And if Christ is risen, nothing else matters.” — Unknown

One day you will stand before Him. The chains you bore, the tears you shed, the trials you endured—all behind you.

What remains? Fruit that lasts, and the voice of your Savior: “*Well done.*”

Church, let’s focus—keep your eyes on Jesus because nothing else matters.