

Is it worth it!

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

This week I experienced a new delicacy – Squid Sandwich

A) Meeting with a Pastor friend – Lunch he knew just the place – just the entrée – Marriage feast

B) So driving down to SD – Point Loma Sea foods

There I had my Squid Sandwich – Great

1) Problem : He says only place he knows of that makes them this way.

C) So the next time that I have a craving for a Squid sandwich – I have to drive to SD

1) Question becomes - Is it worth it ? This case yes

There are a lot of things in this life – where we have to ask ourselves that Question:

A) \$800 car repair – run better gas – avoid – Is it worth it - \$ 800.00 less yes

B) Woman in Labor – Is it worth it – Baby – Absolutely

C) Triathlete – trains like crazy – race comes

1) In the midst of the competition when he is not dying out there – All that training was worth it

D) I'm sure that you can think about things in your life that involved Sacrifice – Involved some toil

1) When over – It was worth it

But what about Spiritually – Spiritually have you ever asked yourself this question: Is it worth it?

A) You became a Christian – a follower of JC – Result – Friends abandoned you

B) Co-workers suddenly didn't understand you

1) Relatives started to avoid you

C) Did the thought ever occur to you even for a second – Is this worth all this?

Since becoming a Christian – you stopped doing some of the things you used to do – have fun or to feel good.

A) Parties / Sex / Drugs / Alcohol – you have removed those things from your life

B) Things that you did before without even thinking about it.

1) But you no longer do those things – because you know that they don't honor God.

C) But have you ever found yourself questioning – after you turn down yet another party invite

1) Is this really worth it.

Maybe you have been sharing the gospel with some of your unsaved family / friends / co-workers

A) Most of the time you only get a deaf ear

B) All your attempts at sharing are rejected

C) You realize that very few are listening –

1) Have you ever – wondered – Why bother – is it really worth the rejection and the heartache

Have you ever found yourself in ministry: Teaching a Bible study / Sunday School / Family Devos

A) You feel misunderstood – under appreciated

B) You feel like no one is listening – paying attention

C) What you are teaching is going in one ear and out the other.

D) Ever wondered – why am I doing this ? Why do I go thru all the effort to prepare study –

1) Why do I take the time to give – Is when it seems like there is so little fruit – Is it really worth it?

I think most of us have had those type of thoughts from time to time.

A) Well in our text today we get to hear from a man

Who's Christian life was marked by struggles

B) A man who's ministry was constantly marked by opposition

1) What would he say – if asked – was it worth it

C) He answers that question in our text – Absolutely it is all worth it !

RD V.17-20

When Paul became a Christian – His friends – religious leaders abandoned him

A) His family disowned him – Tradition – His wife left him

B) Ministry: Went to preach the gospel – everywhere he went he was met by opposition from country men

1) His message fell on deaf ears – and hard hearts

C) More rejected his message than received it

He would start a church and others would come in and try to undermine him – over throw him

A) They would spread lies about Paul –

B) They questioned his motives – They questioned his heart

1) They questioned his teaching

C) He was always ministering in the face of opposition

1) Rarely could Paul describe his ministry as smooth sailing –

In fact here in v.18 he mentions how Satan was hindering him from getting back to Thessalonica

A) Paul was desiring to get back to these people to encourage them in the Lord

B) We have seen thus far in our study in 1 Thess – Paul's Pastoral heart – Father / Mother { Caring

C) He desperately desired to get back to these believers to encourage them in the Lord

1) But Satan Hindered him

– Satan was in his way

D) The word translated hindered is a military term referring to digging a trench or breaking up a road.

One of the counter measures an ancient army would take against the opposition was to dig a massive trench that would prevent enemy troops from reaching its men.

A) Another way to frustrate the enemy's progress would be to tear up a brick or stone road to make it harder to travel on

B) Paul is using this imagery with this word – Trying to get back to you – but the road is difficult

1) Many obstacles that the Devil is putting in our way.

C) Now it is obvious that the Lord permitted this hindrance in Paul's life –

1) Acts 20 reveals for us that Paul eventually made it back there – but it was not in his timing/ God's timing

So why the hindrance: Suggest to you it was to get Paul writing the epistles

A) 1 Thessalonians was one of Paul's earliest letters 2nd possibly only to Galatians

B) Paul was committed to minister to these believers

And when he could come to them – he wrote to them

C) I believe that God used Satan's roadblock to get him to start writing these letters –

1) Ask ourselves – was it worth it – Absolutely

D) I think it is safe to say When Satan saw the great work God did through these letters, he regretted that he ever hindered Paul at all.

So Paul's Christianity was marked by loss – And His ministry was marked by opposition & suffering

A) Was it worth it to Paul ? Absolutely

B) Here is why ? Paul lived his life in light of the coming of the Lord – Rapture of the Church

1) 3 comings – 1st Baby to be the Lamb

C) Another coming – 1Thess 4 Coming not to the earth but to the clouds – Church caught up

1) That is what we are waiting for !

D) Early Church was not looking for a hole in the ground – called death / cleft in the sky – Glory

2nd Coming – Jesus comes not as a Lamb – Lion

A) We are going to be with Him

B) Paul lived his life and ministered in light of the rapture was Coming { Going to Heaven

C) Paul was able to endure affliction here – because He was living for there –

2 Cor 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Paul was able to endure the affliction he went thru here because he looking forward to glory later

A) He was looking forward to the reward - that was waiting for him in the Lord's presence for yrs of faithful service.

B) He was looking forward to receiving a Crown

C) There are 4 different crowns that the Bible mentions as being available to the Believer

1) **Crown of Life** / **Crown of glory** / **Crown of Righteousness** / **Crown of rejoicing**

D) For the remainder of our time today I want to us consider these crowns –

1) What they stand for and how they are obtained

E) Let's start with the one Paul mentions here in our text – V. 19

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰For you are our glory and joy.

The Crown of Rejoicing:

A) This is the Crown of the Soul Winner – those use gift of Evangelism leading others to Christ

B) There will be great Joy and rejoicing in seeing them in Heaven – seeing them in Heaven !!

C) Paul knew that it was worth it – when he could picture in his mind – standing before the Lord one day and seeing the faces of the lives he impacted

D) That was the Hope that filled his heart with Joy –

1) Hope – Absolute good - Lives He impacted

E) It is an incredible thing to think about that God in his grace – allows us to impact a life for eternity.

2 John 4 *I rejoiced greatly that I have found your children walking in truth,*

John 4:35-36

Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

I like this verse because so often that is the way that it is – You sow seed – no results –

A) You are sharing – don't see the affect the person doesn't get saved –

B) Someone else comes along and they water the seed you have sown – more of the word –

1) They end up REAPING – the person gets saved

C) I can't count the letters and emails I have received over the yrs from people – I never met

1) Or people I didn't think I was getting thru to – write to say thanks { Moved away

D) But They came to Christ – or got on the right track with the Lord

1) And from their perspective – it all started during their time here at CCV – Seed was Sown in their heart

E) Some other Church is reaping the benefit –

1) But Jesus says He who sows and He who reaps are going to REJOICE TOGETHER

So hang in there – you who feel like all you ever do is sow seeds of the gospel –

A) Your day of rejoicing is coming – Great Promise in Ps 126:6

6 He who continually goes forth weeping,

Bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

Bringing his sheaves with him.

B) Sometimes your heart breaks as you share with People – lost in sin

1) Your heart breaks over their rejection at the time

C) But take heart the day is coming – where you are going to find out that – some of those seeds took

1) Those lives were Changed – Those people are going to be in Heaven

So here Paul makes mention of the Crown of Rejoicing

A) Now James mentions another crown in his writings – James 1:12 Crown of life

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him

B) Jesus also made mention of this Crown in Rev 2:10 of those who faithfully endure Persecution

Now at this point I want to pause and say that I don't think we are going to be walking around with literal crowns on our heads in Heaven

A) Rather the reference to the crown is speaking of our experience in Heaven

B) The Crown was a symbol of recognition of position

1) Crown Prince / Crown Queen – Recognition of their position – their accomplishment

C) Most of the time that person in royalty is not walking around with their crown

So when the Bible talks about our Crowns – I believe that it is more referring to the recognition that we will receive in Heaven

A) As well as part of our experience there – our enjoyment there.

B) Crown of the Soul winner – Experience is rejoicing – constantly seeing –people he impacted

C) Certain Satisfaction in our Spirit - And Recognition from Jesus –

Parable of the TALENTS –

A) In that Parable Jesus seemed to make it clear that there would be varying degrees of reward and responsibility in His Kingdom

B) Ruler over 10 cities vs. 5 and so forth

C) Think of it this way: All going to enjoy heaven – but our capacity to enjoy it will vary

D) All of us will be rejoicing in Heaven – Some will only be rejoicing that they made it –

1) They escaped the wrath that is to come –

E) Others will be rejoicing not just that they made it

But that others made it – because of them

1) Their Joy will be a little fuller!

So this Crown of life is given to those who endure trials temptation or persecution for Christ

C) So this is the Crown or the title – the experience in Heaven for those who endure trials and persecution

There is a certain depth and richness that happens when two people experience some difficulty together

A) Marriage that has to endure some difficulties – sickness or financial loss

B) They hang in there – they cling to each other and they cling to the Lord -

1) There is a Depth that couple shares that the average person and marriage doesn't experience

C) So too for the believer who goes thru persecution and endures trials and temptations –

1) There is a closeness that they experience with the Lord – There is a depth and richness to their live

D) Paul referred to it as partaking in the fellowship of His suffering

E) I believe that crown of life is a depth that they experience with the Lord in Eternity

1) **Having suffered for Him –**

2) **Having endured the temptation to walk away or give into the Flesh**

EE) Yet there is life awaiting them – that far exceeds any suffering that they endured here

Although the threads of my life have often seemed knotted, I know, by faith, that on the other side of the embroidery there is a crown.

Corrie Ten Boom in My Heart Sings.

F) That is the thing we need to remember – all the stuff that we go thru in this life –

1) One side – Knotted Strands – producing a beautiful embroidery on the other side

So in the midst of suffering – Hang in there – because Jesus is waiting to reward you will a Crown of life

So Crowns for being a soul winner / Crown for enduring trials temptations & persecution

A) *Crown on Glory* 1Pet.5 :4 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

A) This is the CROWN or RECOGNITION GIVEN to those who are faithful in ministering the Word of God !!!!

B) Could refer to Pastors who faithfully feed the Flock / Sunday school teachers who Faithfully minister the word

1) Parents who consistently & Faithfully – share the Word w/ their Kids – the **FLOCK** that the Lord has made them overseers of !!!!

C) Glory speaks of some degree Honor and dignity for those in Heaven –

1) Who faithfully gave the word – with the right motives

D) Not Popularity - / Not dishonest gain / not lording over others.

Then in 2 Tim 4:8 He mentions 4th Crown - the Crown of righteousness =

2 TIM. 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

A) Crown of Righteousness is a reward for living a righteous life

B) Notice it is connected to those who love the Lord's appearing

1 John 3:2 – Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

How it motivates us

1 John 3:3 –And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

C) This is a Crown given to all of those who are eagerly waiting for the Lord to come – those who love His Appearing

D) Those who wake up saying – It might be today – and live their lives accordingly !!!!!

Now one of the things that blesses me when I consider these crowns –

1) Not that difficult to be rewarded in Heaven

A) *Crown for being patient in trials – (That is probably the toughest)*

B) *Crown for being a soul winner – (Simply leading others to Christ)*

C) *Crown for being faithful in Sharing the word to the FLOCK God has placed YOU over !!!!*

D) *Crown for Living a life that simply says – I am waiting for the Lord to Return – Eagerly anticipating His Appearing !!!!!*

Lets go for it – It is worth it !

Now how did that Mentality affect Paul's approach to life ? Turn 1 Cor .9:24 -27

1 Cor 9:24-27

**Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.
²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

Paul is comparing here the Christian life to the Olympic runner and Boxer

A) Those guys train and discipline their bodies – they deny their flesh – perishable Crown

B) How much more should we for an imperishable Crown.

C) They are running to win a crown of leaves that is going to wither and rot –

1) We are running for a Heavenly reward – that remains

For that Reason Paul was Running not just to Run – but to win ! Finish Well ! { Denise

A) He had his eye on the target – not a boxer hitting the air –

B) Target – be closer to Jesus / Be more like Jesus

1) Glorify Jesus

C) So many people settling for Mediocrity in their Christian walks – Just content w/ being there

- 1) Paul wanted to be great for the Lord
- D) Accomplish all that He could for the Lord

So Paul disciplined his Body – brought into subjection – Put it under

” Before you were saved, your body was not “under.” Your body was on top.

A) That is, your flesh governed your soul—your mind and emotions.

B) It also governed your spirit—the real you that lives forever.

1) To see how true this is, all you have to do is listen to the conversations that take place at work or on the campus.

C) What do you hear ? With most people – they talk only about themselves

1) Their financial concerns/ their recreational pursuits, their occupational goals and physical needs.

D) That is mindset of the natural man – All about me!

But when the natural man gets saved, suddenly everything is different.

A) The flesh no longer dominates him.

B) The spirit is now on top, and suddenly there’s peace in his heart and life makes sense.

1) But here is the dilemma: The flesh hates the basement – so it fights – battles – War / flesh and the spirit

C) Constant need to keep the flesh in Check

1) Here is how – Wed. tired – give in Veg watch TV – that is what the flesh wants – Bring it to Church

D) Lunch time instead of going to In and Out – I go to the park and Pray and Fast

E) In the morning the flesh says hit the snooze bar sleep some more –

1) Drag those dry tired bones – out of Bed to seek the Lord – so He can Breathe life into them again.

That is the Point that Paul is making here – I am going to put my flesh under – Finish well

A) I want to win a Crown –

B) My flesh is scared to witness – Put it under believing – God’s word .. return void

1) Rewarder of those who Sow and reap

C) Over come my fear – and share !

My flesh says it is not worth it to teach and be vulnerable to serve and give

A) There is a crown given to those who are faithful in that - - Go for it !

B) Is it worth it – You better believe it !

1 Cor 2:9

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."