

“Keep Paddling Thru The Rapids”

Portions contributed by [Bruce Lee](#).

Psalm 16:1-11

1 Peter 1:3-9

“So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.” 1 Peter 1:6. Now that is the NLT version, which I tend to like its description a little better than our NIV version that we usually use...at least for today's lesson.

Because you see, we all have opportunities to get upset...right? We all have temptations that we are faced with every day. We all have stresses that come to us in life. There are storms that happen in everyone's life, no matter how good of a person you are, you are going to have these kinds of struggles. You are going to have these tests and these trials. And, you cannot just pray the difficulties away.

Although, sometimes we try to use our faith to control the circumstances, when instead, it would better to use your faith to control yourself...when you are in a difficult time. I have learned that if I can just stay calm...if I can just stay steady in the middle of a problem...if I can stay the course...I have learned that if I can just stay committed to going forward, that is what allows God to change the things around me.

You know, when Robinson Crusoe was ship wrecked, on a deserted island, he made what he called a list. One was of the evil things on the island, where the other was of the good things.

On the evil side, he was a castaway all alone; on the good side, he was alive. On the evil side, he was far from all humankind and far from all human society; on the good side, he was not starving. On the evil side, he had no change of clothes; on the good side, he was in a warm tropical area where he didn't need clothes.

On the evil side, he was without defense; on the good side, he had not run into any animals like he had seen on the coast of Africa. On the evil side, there was no one to speak to; on the good side, the tide had brought his sunken ship close enough to the shore where he could get to the things that he needed.

So after making this list, he concluded that he was in one of the most miserable situations he could possibly be in, but there were still positive things for him to find.

What about you? Do you see the things in your life to be thankful for?

The Apostle Peter wrote these words to encourage people who were going through difficult times. **“So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.” 1 Peter 1:6 NLT**

Maybe you are dealing with an illness in your family. Maybe you are struggling financially. Maybe you are going through a difficult time emotionally or even going through a hard time spiritually. Or, maybe you are just not sure of anything good in your life. Whatever you're dealing with now, know that the scripture has promised **“There is wonderful joy ahead...”**

Today we are going to talk about how we need to “Keep Paddling thru the Rapids.”

Now, I like to kayak; on lakes and on rivers. But I have never kayaked on any other lakes or rivers other than the ones that we have here in Michigan...Manly the “White River” or the “Muskegon River”, since I live basically on one and near the other.

I have always wanted to try whitewater rafting though. And I have looked into doing so in the past, but my life has never opened up for me to tackle that adventure. But, recently doing some dreaming, because of

the situation we have currently found ourselves in, I have been daydreaming about exploring this adventure once again.

So, this past week I went looking for whitewater rafting opportunities. Again, I had never been whitewater rafting before, and it looks like a lot of fun, but it also looked like there was a lot of danger involved. I know a couple of individuals who have been whitewater rafting, and asked them about their experience. This was one of their stories.

Before we got into our boat and onto the water, our guide instructed us: “When I say paddle, you should paddle. If you do not paddle you could be propelled out of the boat. If you fall out of the boat and I say swim to the left you should swim to the left. If you do not swim to the left you could become trapped under a rock and die.”

I was very fortunate to find myself on a boat with a young lady who claimed to be a life guard. I told her, “If I fall out of this boat, and I am in trouble...Please be a hero, jump in and save me.”

Okay! Let me stop there, because you see, we live in a very troubled, and very unbelieving world of struggles and temptations. It is when you join others in a boat, or like at a church, that you are then surrounded by a living hope in Jesus Christ.

We look forward to that encouragement, that support, and when necessary, even the rescue from someone around us. That is the living hope found in Jesus Christ who rose from the dead and is alive, and also the living hope found in being part of a loving church, among the people of God.

So, if you are watching and listening to us today, and you are **HAVING** troubles, I want you to call, text, or email me, so we can talk about them. Now, if you **DON'T** have any troubles that you are currently facing, please call, text, or email me, and tell me how you're doing it!

Now, with my research and discussions about this adventure of whitewater rafting, I have discovered that there are a few comparisons that I want to make today that are true to life about whitewater rafting.

First you can't ignore the rapids. Once you are out there on that boat there is no turning back...and you have to paddle thru. There are different levels and classifications of rapids.

LEVEL 1 and 2 are just moving water, with just a few little white ripples. It is relaxing. It is like a lazy river...you are just floating along...like we are used to here on the Muskegon River, were you are allowed us to get out of the boat from time to time and do some swimming.

A LEVEL 3...now there is where things began to change. Narrow passages that send the boat tossing from side to side, with waves of water gushing in over the sides of the boat. Plenty of excitement.

LEVEL 4...The rapids are now more difficult, they last longer, turbulent water that requires coordinated paddling and sends the heart racing.

Then LEVEL 5...Large, long, more complex, gushing rapids, twisting, turning, spinning in every direction to deliver the full adrenaline rush.

Back to my friends story and the guides instructions; Again, if you fall out of the boat...and I say swim to the left...you should swim to the left to avoid the large rocks. Or on downstream he would say, "This time if you fall out of the boat. Swim to the right. You should swim to the right to avoid the strong undercurrent that can drag you down underneath the water."

Then the guide would give us instructions to paddle. When he says left two. Those on the left side of the boat were to give two strokes. When he says all paddle, everyone is to paddle as hard as you can until he says stop. Then he would say, "Ahead is a LEVEL 5 rapid."

My friend said, “That is the moment when you are in the boat when the water is gushing in the front and the water is gushing in both sides. There were times when water surrounded us with walls of water literally several feet above our head. And the guide would yell, ‘All paddle.’”

“It is then,” my friend said, “that you realized, that if you do not paddle, the boat would spin around or it could be tossed and could even capsize.”

The same thing is true in life. You cannot just ignore the things around you and just hope they go away. You can’t ignore temptations. You got to pray about it and deal with it with the help of God and your friends.

You can’t ignore a struggle. You got to pray about it and trust God and friends to help you thru that difficult time. You cannot ignore a pain or a hurt. Ignoring our troubles is what is sometimes called the Clint Eastwood approach to pain.

You know; the macho approach. The...I'm a tough guy...just grin and bear it...give me a bullet to chew on...I'm just going to ignore it...out of sight, out of mind...if I just ignore it long enough, maybe it will go away, type attitude.

But...that is just not true. Psalm 32:3 tells us, "**There was a time when I refused to confess my sin it made me weak and miserable and I groaned all day long with frustration.**"

Ask yourself this question: What am I pretending not to know? What struggle am I ignoring in my life? What hurt am I simply not giving attention to?

Why do we pretend? Because we think, “If I can just ignore it..., maybe it will go away.” Yet Psalm 32 says, “**When I don’t admit my hurt, when I don’t admit where I’ve blown it, when I don’t admit my sin, all that does is it makes me miserable and it makes me frustrated.**” You see, you need to talk to someone.

How do you know when you're trying to ignore a problem? You refuse to talk to anyone about it. You procrastinate about it. "One of these days... I'm going to go to the dentist." ... "One of these days I'm going to have a doctor look at this." ... "One of these days I'm going to get some financial advice counseling." ... "One of these days I'm going to talk to the pastor about my problem."

We always procrastinate when it is painful. It's a fact of life. It is human nature. BUT it is also going against what God has instructed us to do. So then, why do we keep postponing?

Notice what happens, the bible says, "...it makes me miserable..." It makes us frustrated, because when I deny a hurt, I never get the healing, it just makes it worse. When we ignore a problem or a pain, it turns a minor problem into major problem...like the phrase, "You make a mountain, out of a mole hill."

But, when you talk to someone about your problem and ask for God's help; you are proving to God that you trust God to help you. By your action you "Keep Paddling Thru the Rapids."

"So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while." 1 Peter 1:6 NLT...Don't run from it.

I've learned this lesson in life. I try not to run from it anymore. I have tried running from problems, but it just doesn't work. Psalm 55:6-8 says, **"I wish I had wings like a dove, I'd fly away and find some rest. I'd flee to some refuge from all this storm."**

How many times have you felt like that? Oh, if I just had wings I would fly away. I am facing this difficulty and I would just like to run away from it instead. It is human nature to try to run from difficulty. It is a fact of life.

Do you know that by law, all doors in public buildings swing outward? When people panic, they run. They try to escape. You can't avoid the rapids. You just have to learn to keep paddling thru them.

Have you noticed, how people in general, hate to admit it when we have deep feelings? "You're angry."... "No, I'm not!" "Yes, you are."... "No, I'm not!"

You see, we don't like to admit when we are hurt, so we often try to just avoid talking about it or hide our hurt, we wear a mask. It is game called: "Honey is something wrong?"

You know how that goes, "Is something wrong?" "No, no, nothing's wrong." "I can tell something's wrong." "No, everything is just hunky-dory" "I can tell something's wrong!"

You see it doesn't take a lot to get us ticked off, right? You've got so much hurt in your life. Right now you are so fed up to the brim, that any slight bump will cause us to jiggle – and then spill out all over! And then you come unglued...you come apart.

Why don't we ever just talk about it? Why don't we ever just share it? If you don't show it outwardly, you do it inwardly. You are not helping yourself get through a problem by taking off or hiding or avoiding your hurts.

There is story about two men talking. The first man says, "I don't worry about my problems. I don't even think about them anymore." The second man says, "You're kidding? In this crazy world...how can you not worry?" First man: "I hired a professional worrier. He does all my worrying for me. I pay him to worry about my problem so, I don't have to worry about anything." Second man: "That's incredible! How much does he cost?" First: "A hundred thousand dollars a year." Second man: "Where are you going to get that kind of money?" First: "I don't worry about it. It is not my problem!"

Have you noticed that when you worry about something it increases the size of the problem? If somebody criticizes you, the more you then rehearse it in your mind. Someone has said something about you and that is harmful to you, and you begin to dwell on that, and the more you dwell on it...the bigger and bigger it gets. Pretty soon, you begin to think the whole world is against you.

So, you've got two options: rehearse it or release it. The more you rehearse a problem, the more you repeat it in your head. The more you remember it the bigger and bigger it gets in your life.

Psalm 73:21-22 says, "**When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt, I did not understand you.**"

That is one of the things that can happen in almost any relationship. It can happen at your work...it can happen in your marriage...it can happen between children...it can even happen in the church.

Whenever there is hurt and bitterness that is buried, it can often result in our misunderstanding of one another. I don't understand you because I have been hurt by you...I don't understand you because I am bitter, and my feelings have been hurt.

I don't understand what you are saying. I don't even understand why God is allowing this to happen to me. And then soon...you begin to resent everything and everyone around you.

Now, there is one thing more harmful than your hurt. Regardless of why you are hurting, there's one thing more harmful than that hurt. And that is to become resentful about that hurt.

Resentment is much, much worse than anything you'll ever hurt over. If you become resentful, it just becomes a poison that prolongs the hurt. It completely clouds the issues and keeps you from having joy. **“So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is**

**necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.” 1 Peter 1:6
NLT**

The point is, the past cannot hurt you any longer. The past can't hurt you! That is, unless you let allow it to hurt you. The past can only hurt you as long as you dwell in the past, and continue to keep looking back...behind you. As long as you keep digging up the things people have said to you, or done to you, you are still just letting them control you.

Resentment will never change what has happened. It will never let you get over it. It happened! It's over...It's gone...It's finished. Let it go! You can't ever change the past...you just ruin the present with yesterday's resentment. Let it go!

The past is past and nothing is ever going to change it. Not even all the resentment, bitterness, anger, and hurt, in this world, is going to change your past. If you want your marriage to work...quit trying to fix the past. Instead spend your energy on one another today. Quit fixing the blame of...of who's at fault, and start looking at the wonderful time of joy that is just ahead.

If you want have real peace in your life, start looking for the joy you are missing out on. Anyone who has ever gone on a whitewater rafting trip, it would have been so easy to have looked around...to have been afraid...to have not paddled...to have just given up.

But instead, you have to “Keep Paddling Thru the Rapids.” When you do, you come out on the other side, and discover it's joy.

I am convinced that this message is for someone out there who hears it today. Don't give up. Maybe this is the level you're at today. You are in a level five rapids. Maybe you've been carrying a hurt for so long you're thinking, “What is the use? Why even try? I'm at the end of my rope. The waves are gushing in all around me. I am way in over my head. I want to just throw in the towel. I just want to call it quits.”

I have felt that way myself. But the voice of God spoke to me and said, “Don’t quit. Don’t give up. Stay the course.”

And thank God that...I-did-not-give-up. Thank God that my friends did not give up on me. Thank God my church supported me. Thank God for his word.

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Just “Keep Paddling Thru the Rapids.” **Amen!!!**