

Additions to Faith

Perseverance —Part 2

Endurance and Steadfastness

Introduction

In our last lesson, we considered the first two elements of the grace of perseverance—Forbearance and Longsuffering. Today we will focus on the third and fourth aspects of perseverance; Endurance and Steadfastness.

There is no gift of perseverance mentioned in the Bible, not even as one of the gifts of the Spirit. The problem with perseverance is that it must be developed. Even when you decide to follow Christ, you don't automatically become a patient person. Each of the 12 disciples had to experience frequent lessons in this area of godly living. The Apostle James writes, "the trial of your faith develops patience." I suppose we should thank God that perseverance isn't the first thing we need to add to our faith, or there probably would only be a handful of disciples following Jesus today.

The New Testament reality is that to grow in faith and become a veteran believer, you must develop perseverance. To move from discipleship to apostleship, you must pass the test of patience. James says we develop patience through the trials of our faith. Sadly, that's where many believers quit growing in their Christian walk; they just don't have the patience for it!

Trials will stretch you. Trials reach down into the core of your belief system. Yet, in the trials of life, we grow in Christian maturity and develop a deep confidence and trust in God's ability to provide and guide us. The problem for most of us is that we pray, "Lord, give me patience." God sends along a trial and tests our faith in answer to our prayer, and we immediately pray, "God, why are you doing this to me? Why did you allow this to happen? Sorry, I didn't know when I said I wanted to develop patience; I would have to go through this trial! So, please get me out of these struggles and difficulties." But God wants you to add to your faith perseverance.

It's so easy to be a part of the "me" generation these days. The "me" generation thinks the world exists and revolves around them. They think God exists only to supply all their needs. But the New Testament truth is we exist for the pleasure of our Creator. What do you believe? Let's test the theory. "How many decisions have you made recently without consulting God?" Would you say you the master of your life, or is Christ? We shouldn't expect God to bless what we're doing until we're doing what God is blessing!

Compared to forbearance and longsuffering, "endurance" and "steadfastness" take the grace of patience to a significantly higher level of development in Christian character.

I. ENDURANCE

Endurance is demonstrating patience and persevering in all the experiences of your life. Forbearance and longsuffering are most often associated with the conduct of others. It's a progressive tolerance of those who may say or do things in opposition to us.

Endurance involves pressing on in faith through each day and each circumstance of our Christian life. We develop endurance as we overcome through life's experiences. The Bible says the Lord orders a righteous person's steps. James 1 says, "the testing of your faith produces patience." We develop endurance through difficult experiences, trials, testings, and temptations that we face on the road of life. If we only had pleasant experiences and never experienced trials, it would be impossible to develop endurance. God, in his wisdom, sees our need for blessings and trials. We develop an overcoming faith from the blessings and benefits of life's trials.

The Greek word used for endurance is the same word that is used for steadfastness. *Strong's* concordance uses these synonyms to describe endurance: bearing calmly, holding fast in the trial, a hopeful and cheerful endurance. The Discover Bible says that endurance is a highly developed aspect of perseverance. Forbearance and longsuffering are defined primarily by how we exercise patience toward others outwardly in a particular situation. Endurance demonstrates a quality of inward character development, an attitude of cheerfulness and hopefulness, a holding fast, and calmness even when going through the trials of life.

Endurance reflects inward character. In Colossians 1:10, Paul says his goal is " that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." ([Colossians 1:10-12](#))

Paul connects endurance and longsuffering with joy. What joy? -The joy of being qualified to partake of the inheritance of the saints. As we develop endurance, we learn to accept our experiences and trials with an inward joy because we know the end result will be rewarded.

It's for the reward we joyfully endure the difficult experiences of life. That is why Jesus endured the Cross. Hebrews 12 tells us that Jesus is our example of endurance and that we should follow His example. Verse 1 says, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." ([Hebrews 12:1-2](#))

Paul says patient endurance is needed to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." The Apostle James writes that Job is an excellent example of endurance. In Chapter 5:11, he says, "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." (James 5:11)

Why did James say that "we count them blessed (or happy)" who endure - and then bring up Job, who went through such terrible trials? How could Job have possibly been "happy" about the tragedies and trials he had to endure? The answer is in the phrase "the end intended by the Lord." The joy and celebration come at the end when you have endured the affliction and survived the bitterness and anguish meant to destroy your hope and faith in God. It is emerging from the storms of life with your faith and confidence in Christ intact!

Job believed, by faith, that the end result God intended for him was a good one. Even if he experienced death in this life, Job believed the God he served had determined a resurrection for him. That is the blessed hope of every child of God. In the midst of his trials, with calmness and confident hope, Job prayed, "Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, (Have you ever had a death wish?) That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live *again*? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes." (Job 14:13-14)

Job focused on the goal! He kept his eye on the "end of the suffering and the reward of the Lord." At the end of the suffering and trial, Job 42:12 says, "the LORD blessed the latter *days* of Job more than his beginning." When we endure life's difficulties and remain steadfast, even in the most severe trials, we will overcome!

We will endure to see God's blessing and reward. James says in the first chapter of his epistle, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4 NKJV)

He says in verse 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." (James 1:12 NKJV)

This crown of life is promised only to those who show they love the Lord by humble obedience under difficult circumstances and endurance of trials. In Romans 12, Paul says overcomers are the ones "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer." (Romans 12:12 NKJV)

The best thing to focus upon in tribulation is your hope in Christ. Our hope in Christ keeps us enduring to the end. The great love chapter of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, includes endurance. Paul writes that, "Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but

rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV)

Forbearance, longsuffering, and endurance all play an essential role in the development of love. He commends the Thessalonians for enduring and says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father," (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NKJV)

Notice how Paul connects endurance to hope. Hope is critical to successful endurance. Paul says that Jesus "endured the cross." Jesus faithfully endured not just the literal cross of Calvary but the entire three and one-half years of earthly ministry full of testings, trials, and sufferings.

The Book of Hebrews says that Jesus endured the "contradiction of sinners against himself." The word "contradiction" means opposition. Jesus faithfully endured the cross with a proper attitude, even in the face of opposition. Why did he do it? The Apostle Paul says Jesus did it "for the joy that was set before him." With His mind fixed on the hope set before him, Jesus endured hopefully, joyfully, and willingly.

Paul then tells US to look "unto Jesus" and to "consider him." Why? Because He is the perfect pattern and example of endurance in trial and testing.

II. Steadfastness

This brings us to the final component of patience; steadfastness. The Christian goal is to reach a level of spiritual maturity in which forbearance, longsuffering, and endurance are all carried out faithfully, to the highest degree possible.

Steadfastness is a perseverance that has become so deeply embedded in our character that our response is automatic, ever-present, and never-changing. Steadfastness can be described as a continuing constancy.

Endurance is developed through experiences; one experience built upon another and applied properly for the purpose of spiritual growth. David pictures this for us when he says, "I fought the lion and the bear, who is the uncircumcised Philistine." We achieve steadfastness by persevering over the long haul of our Christian journey. Endurance is a means of attaining spiritual growth and maturity.

Steadfast is the measurable level of spiritual growth and maturity that has already been attained. Jesus made several statements about steadfastness. In Matthew 10:22, Jesus said, "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:22 NKJV)

Endurance combined with the words "to the end" is steadfastness. Endurance is about overcoming in a specific space of time. Steadfastness is a commitment to

overcome to the very end. In Luke 21: 19, Jesus says, "**By your patience possess your souls.** (Luke 21:19 NKJV)

Moffat translates the word for patience in this verse as "steadfastness." By steadfastness over the long-term of our Christian walk, perseverance fully "possesses" us. Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, encouraging them to be among those "who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) He uses the same Greek word that translates to "steadfastness."

Glory, honor, and immortality are only achieved through steadfast dedication and faithfulness. Paul encourages Timothy with these words, saying, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (II Tim. 2:12) The word "suffer" is the Greek word for patience. The Hebrew writer says, "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:" (Hebrews 10:36 NKJV)

The Moffat translation says, "steady patience is what you need." Doing the will of God, as Paul says, is a lifetime of work. The key to our success is doing God's will through a steadfast perseverance. 2 Thessalonians 1:3 says, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:3-12 NKJV)

Overcoming in faith despite persecution and tribulation requires a Godly perseverance; developed through forbearance, longsuffering, endurance, and steadfastness.

Conclusion

Our Christian walk includes a multitude of different kinds of experiences. Some experiences put us on the mountaintop of blessing, while other experiences lead us deep into the valley of trials.

Perseverance does not diminish the mountaintop joys, nor does it eliminate the valley experiences. What it does do, is provide balance to the experiences of life. Developing perseverance requires time, spiritual maturity, and much faith. It requires success in forbearance, longsuffering, endurance, and steadfastness.

James says, "let patience have her complete work, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4). If self-control is the grace of holding back, then perseverance is the grace of holding on! It is the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person that avails much.

Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Some situations may seem quite impossible, but with perseverance, you can fight the good fight of faith and overcome. Yes, we need to hold on and persevere during the hard times, but the time will come when we're flowing in the blessing of God. That's when we most need to be patient and actively pursue the will of God.

Perseverance has a great defense, but it also goes on the offensive. Through perseverance, I learn to tear down the strongholds of Satan and establish the kingdom of Christ. We are not the victims of this life; we are the victor's through Christ. We are more than conquerors through Christ. You may lose a battle or two, but Christ will win the war!

If you're in the middle of some trying circumstances, don't give up; dig in, persevere, and keep asking for God's help and direction. Don't be a whiner, be a winner. Remember, perseverance allows you to recognize God's timing and change your schedule to fit His. Practice forbearance, longsuffering, endurance, and steadfastness by adding perseverance to your faith.