

Keeping On Keeping On

(Adapted from *Path to Righteousness* by Linda Poitras)

“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end,
the same shall be saved”
(Mark 13:13).

Introduction

The definition of *endure* is “to tolerate, suffer, or survive.” The key word here is “survive.” Survival speaks to us of some trouble, difficulty, or disaster. One does not speak about surviving a party. This word is used when speaking of floods, earthquakes, or accidents where people come out alive, and able to continue.

The same is true with our spiritual walk: we endure when we survive the rough places, trials, and temptations we encounter as we travel the road of life. As with a race, it is not the one who begins, but the one who completes the journey, who receives a reward.

In his book, *The Success Journey*, Dr. John Maxwell tells the true story of a special race. The year was 1968, and the place was the Olympic Games in Mexico City. The marathon race is a grueling competition, and the runner from Ethiopia won amid cheers and shouts of victory. Several hours later, a light drizzle of rain began to fall, and the fans decided it was time to go home. They thought all the runners had come in. Just as they began to leave, the sirens of the police escort were heard in the distance. Could it be? Someone was still running. They strained their eyes to identify the lone man who came limping painfully across the finish line – at least two hours after the race was won. He was the runner from Tanzania. Upon investigation, it was learned this young man had sustained a serious injury and had been running with his leg bandaged. He was obviously in much pain, and the reporters could not figure out why he had bothered to continue running when the trophy had already been given. They asked him, “Why did you keep running when you were injured?” His reply is a testimony to us all: “My country did not send me to the Olympics to start; they sent me to *finish* the race.”

Our God did not bless us with His Spirit for us to give up but He intended for us to *finish* the race.

Endurance – Through Difficulties

God’s Word promises many blessings for our faithful endurance. However, it does not promise no pain or suffering, until we get to heaven. Jesus, our perfect example knew what it meant to “endure.” “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set

The Old Testament has many examples for us to look at and gain encouragement.

before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:2-3). Jesus was giving us an example to follow, so we would know what He expected.

Jonathan – the son of King Saul: This young man is mentioned just a few times in the Bible, but each one proves his faithfulness and loyalty to the things of God. It was through no fault of his that the kingdom was lost. His father became proud and sinned against God in sacrificing a burnt offering to the Lord. This was the duty of the priest – the man of God – not the king. God refused to hear Saul's prayers because of this sin. Even then, Saul did not repent, but was only concerned with a show of his religion rather than obedience to the commandment of God (1 Samuel 13:8-14).

The Philistines had gathered themselves together against the army of Israel, and they were a great host. The Lord is always greater than our enemies. He is always looking for someone who will inquire of His voice. Jonathan was such a man. He saw the desperate situation they were in, but was more concerned with fighting the battle than with the difficulty. He told his armor bearer to follow him, believing God would help them defeat the enemies of His people. The passage they had to follow to reach the Philistine camp was between two sharp outcroppings of rock – a difficult way indeed. But this did not stop them. 1 Samuel 14:6 says:

"And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few."

When they reached the place where they could see the army of the enemy, they stopped to inquire of the Lord, and decide how they would go about this thing. Jonathan told his armor bearer, "Let us reveal ourselves to them and if they say 'wait, we will come to you' then we shall stand still. But, if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up because then the Lord has delivered them into our hands. This shall be the sign to us." Guess what? The most difficult way was God's way.

God went with them and gave the victory. Jonathan and his armor bearer slew about twenty men (two against twenty is a tough fight) and then the Bible tells us that the Lord sent an earthquake. The Philistine army began to flee. God does not need numbers to win the victory – He needs someone who will put their trust in Him and *keep on keeping on!*

Daniel – a slave in Babylon: The story of Daniel is a familiar one, but we need to remember when this story began. Daniel, still a teenager, was captured and taken from his home in Jerusalem to the court of King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. His dependence and faith in God were evident from the beginning of his captivity. Daniel refused to eat the king's meat (meat offered to idols), but was wise enough to suggest an alternative plan that would not cause the

king's other servant to get into trouble (Daniel 1:8-17). Daniel showed his concern for others very early in his story.

Throughout his long career in the court of many kings of Babylon, Daniel kept the faith. It was certainly not easy. He suffered and went through many trials, but his *endurance* kept him faithful to the end.

The New Testament Teaches Endurance Also

There are many examples of endurance through hardship in the New Testament, especially after the birth of the church in the book of Acts. As one of the first missionaries, Paul is a prime example of a life of hardship, with a victorious, faithful end. Here is what he says about his life journey:

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

After all these things, Paul still had the testimony of endurance: “For now I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Strength for Endurance Comes From God

Another Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, spoke of the ability to endure hardship.

“Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:28-31).

God knows the way that we take. He understands that it is not easy. But He has promised to be *with us*; even *in us*, and we can make it!

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43:2).

How is He in us? “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Conclusion

God has given us everything we need to finish the race:

- His Word to guide us,
- His Spirit within us, and
- A hope of heaven waiting for us.

“You’re going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food – catchy opinions that tickle their fancy.

They’ll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages.

But you – keep your eye on what you’re doing:

accept the hard times along with the good:

keep the Message alive:

do a thorough job as God’s servant.

You take over.

I’m about to die.

My life an offering on God’s altar.

This is the only race worth running. I’ve run hard right to the finish, believed all the way.

All that’s left now is the shouting – God’s applause!

Depend on it. He’s an honest judge.

He’ll do right, not only by me, but by everyone eager for his coming”

(2 Timothy 4:3-8, *The Message*).

Study Questions

1. Define and briefly explain the meaning of the term “endure.” _____

2. Write out the verses that prove the statement “Jesus, our perfect example, knew what it meant to endure.” _____
