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How Do We Develop Endurance?

Romans 5:3-4: (NASB) ³*And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope...*



Life has become quick and easy - think about it: we have instant coffee, instant oatmeal, Instagram, Instant Messenger, fast food, Jiffy Lube and "while-you-wait" service. We can instantly see our photos, instantly send and receive our mail, instantly buy or sell online and instantly see 75 different versions of what is happening in the world. We think that in many ways we have forgotten what it is like to work for something - to toil, to engage and to fight through adversity for the sake of something that is not instant. We are talking about endurance - we have forgotten the absolute and almost miraculous sustaining power of endurance! What is endurance? How can we get some?

One does not just wake up one day with endurance - real, life-changing endurance is a step-by-step process.

What role does endurance play in the life of a Christian? Romans 5:1-5: (NASB) ¹*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Simple fact: justification brings peace with God) ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Another fact: God's peace brings His grace, which means unmerited favor. These facts now enable our hearts to engage.) ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about **perseverance <5281>**; ⁴and **perseverance <5281>**, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

Perseverance: Strongs #5281 cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy
KJV - enduring, patience, patient continuance, waiting. Often translated "patience."

By using the English word *patience*, we miss an important part of what was meant in the original Greek - *cheerful endurance*. Cheerful endurance has not only the sense of accepting whatever the issue is but with a positive outlook. The difficulties are viewed through the lens of God's positive overruling - how can this experience help me to be more Christ-like?

Another Greek word is used for *perseverance* in some places:

Perseverance: Strongs #5278 to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere

To live with endurance/perseverance is a head and heart decision. To truly endure we must first have a clear intellectual perception of the "why" of our need for endurance. Second, we must also have a heart that is fully committed to that "why," a heart that willingly pours itself out because of that "why." The "how" of our endurance will come once these two elements are firmly in place. With endurance, our lives can be elevated to a higher level, one that is much more God-honoring.

What kinds of experiences stimulate the building up of endurance in our characters?

James 1:2-4: (NASB) ²*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance <5281>**. ⁴And let **endurance <5281>** have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Remember, the word *endurance* here has the added feature of cheerful endurance. Our trials and difficulties in life brought on by the circumstances of our humanness beg for endurance, for it is in these very experiences that we must as Christians realize the reality of our faith with a long term, endurance-based approach. Hebrews 12:11.

What are the reasons for our trials and afflictions? Hebrews 12:7-13: We need a positive outlook in order to continue on.



A perspective through which we can see our trials and afflictions as tools:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: A long view and big picture of our experience inspire endurance!

We need to view our experiences from the standpoint of our ultimate eternal good.

The results of our trials and afflictions - as long as we apply endurance: James 1:12: Carry that developmental weight of experience until we complete it according to God's standard!

Summing up our endurance through trial and affliction: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: *Run to win* means you know *why* you are running. Self-control is an outgrowth of knowing and embracing the "why." Fighting to win through self-discipline is an intense, "do it now" picture.

The Scriptures use expressive language to focus us on endurance. The idea of running a race or fighting with an objective are all pictures that show us cheerful endurance and the ability to stay under the weight of the experience. This helps us move forward and upward!

Rick's "WHY?" It is to HONOR GOD! "If what I'm doing at any point in my life is not fulfilling those two words, I ask myself, 'why am I doing that?' It is a simple way to put things in a bigger perspective."

What is YOUR "why?" It must be "head knowing" and "heart embracing" to be effective

If we are developing endurance, does that mean something like persecution is good for you?

Hebrews 12:3-4: Wherever and whenever there is persecution, it creates by virtue of its mere presence, a crossroads. We can go down the road of caving into persecution's pressure or choose the high road of principled endurance. 1 Peter 3:13-17: Persecution - for the right reasons - brings blessings. The secret for blessings from persecution lies in what our deepest focus sees. What is our deepest focus looking at? If it is Christ, then we will always be ready to answer - and not just answer - but answer with a spiritual mind. Set him apart as the centerpiece of focus from all the noise and distraction around you.

Just because we may be able to represent Christ and even "win" when falsely accused does not mean our conscience is on autopilot. Persecution can spur retaliation if we are not focused.

Persecution can and often does come from those who are close to us - those whose influence is important: Luke 21:16-19

Because persecution is difficult, we are constantly reminded of what enduring it produces:

Matthew 5:10-12: It is a fight! Our endurance finds its nourishment in the strength of God! How can we remain faithful? We have to find our "why." Remember, that is something in your head that you bring to your heart. Once your heart embraces it, you have a powerful force.

Ephesians 6:10-13: We are not just fighting against another person - it is much bigger than that. There are spiritual forces of wickedness - in places of authority and power - all around us. Even spirituality has been corrupted under Satan's rule. If these forces are against what Christianity stands for, we have a choice to make. Are we going to stand and endure for the sake of Christ?

Christian endurance is the ability to withstand hardship and adversity with cheerfulness. It is the practice of standing up under the weight of circumstance, evil and opposition with an undying hope that is founded and grounded in Christ, his sacrifice and the mission he gave us to follow him.

The erroneous concept of "once saved, always saved," would not be motivating, leading to becoming complacent or lukewarm. There is a danger in that thinking.

We have seen Christian endurance developed in trial and affliction: 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

We have seen Christian endurance developed through persecution: John 16:31-33

Let's examine another area that truly develops Christian endurance. The deeper we live in this area, the deeper our endurance...we are talking about loyalty!



Where there is loyalty there must by definition be endurance: 2 Corinthians 6:4-10: Paul's loyalty required deep, CHEERFUL endurance in the really hard areas of life...But Paul's loyalty required deep endurance in the really *blessed* areas of life, to be able to absorb all of that goodness and spirituality to be able to pass it on. Paul's loyalty and endurance reveal the manifold deliverances of one truly devoted to Christ!

Revelation 2:10: (KJV) *be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Jonathan's "why" is helping others (expecting nothing in return) but giving God the honor and the glory. When he first heard that God's plan was to bless ALL the families of the earth, he knew he would follow God.

What is your "why" and does it genuinely move your heart? You cannot find Christian endurance unless you have both of these things.

How do the Scriptures describe the "game face" of endurance?

"Putting your game face on" means you are serious and ready with intensity and focus.

Jesus himself through prophecy shows us the game face of endurance: Isaiah 50:5-9: Jesus subjected himself to the greatest of insults. In whatever dishonor man can give, there is no disgrace for the God-honoring life - therefore I will set my direction to an unalterable course! I will set my face like flint, like stone. There will be no movement from what is most important. All falsehood - no matter how powerful - cannot stand against eternal truth and righteousness!

The many faces of endurance: 2 Timothy 2:2-7: The face of a soldier is the face of one sworn to duty for a cause for which he is willing to die. Sometimes the only way to get through pain is to embrace it. When we apply that for the sake of Christ, we can glorify God through Christ.

The face of an athlete is the face of discipline and focus, it is the face of training to compete and win.

The face of the farmer is the face of patience, knowledge, hard work and consistency. It is the face of steady discipline and compassion.

The face of the Apostle Paul is the face of loyalty, example, hardship and victory:

2 Timothy 2:10-13: Our endurance can only breed victory if we keep it focused on God above. Our example to those fellow soldiers walking in Christ is important. If we show endurance, that can help encourage them on their own walk.

Okay, so we need endurance! Where do we find the strength to get it?

Our brethren in Christ: Christianity is referred to as the *body of Christ*. One part supports the other. Are you in a position where you can provide inspiration for others and help lift them up and honor God? Take what you have been given and give it to others. What is "in your hand?" What are your talents and abilities that can be used in the Lord's service?

Look to the Old Testament: Hebrews 12:1-2: *A great cloud of witnesses* = these are the faithful in the Old Testament described throughout chapter 11. We have the examples of the ancients to show us overcoming in so many difficult circumstances. This is why Christianity needs the Old Testament. It gives us strength to add to the New Testament. These are the people who would have inspired Jesus. He knew the Old Testament very well.

We have the example of Jesus, the author of our faith:

- He embraced the joy of God before him.
- This joy carried him through the horror of the cross.
- This joy made light of the utter human shame put upon him.
- This joy delivered him to the right hand of the throne of God!

Jesus was loyal - PERIOD! He had no option in his mind and heart than to give honor to his heavenly Father.

Finally, look up! We have help from above.



Isaiah 40:26-31: Know the source of your ultimate strength! Realize that His understanding, His way and His endurance are eternal. Believe He is an endless power source compared to those in the prime of life and to those who are mighty in the eyes of men! God opens us up to spiritual endurance. Even the best of us eventually run out of energy and do not want to continue. God is not in that category. Trade in your old source of strength and put on HIS strength, HIS endurance - for it is only then that we can mount up with wings and not become weary!

Romans 8:37-39: The strength we should be running with as true footstep followers of Christ is not ours! Endurance means having our loyalty set above, inspiring us to rise above. Nothing can separate us from the love of God and Jesus. Set your face like flint and run the race of the high calling!

*So, how do we develop endurance?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*