

ENDURANCE vs. DISCOURAGEMENT

EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE BY REJOICING IN TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS.

“And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Galatians 6:9

DEFINITION OF ENDURANCE

Endurance represents the physical stamina required for a race. However, the character quality of endurance goes deeper than physical stamina. It includes the strength that comes by rejoicing in the reproaches of following the ways of God.

Kakopatheo, (to suffer trouble, to be afflicted, to undergo hardship) and *anechomai*, (to hold oneself up against, to put up with, to bear and forbear) are translated in the New Testament as *endure*. *Hupomeno*, also rendered *endure*, means “to stay under, to undergo, to have fortitude, to persevere, to suffer, to take patiently, and to remain.”

To endure means to tenaciously hold on until reaching a goal. Jacob clung to the angel and declared, “I will not let you go unless you bless me!” God not only blessed him but affirmed, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.” (Genesis 32:26 and 28, New International Version)

WHAT ARE WE TO ENDURE?

The following passages explain the types of trials we are to endure:

1. **Endure hardness** — “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” (2 Timothy 2:3).
2. **Endure affliction** — “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,” (2 Tim 4:3-4, New American Standard)
3. **Endure persecutions and tribulations** — “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer,” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5).
4. **Endure grief** — “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (II Peter 2:19).
5. **Endure chastening** — “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” (Hebrews 12:7, New American Standard).
6. **Endure temptations** — “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him,” (James 1:12).
7. **Endure all things** — “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory,” (II Timothy 2:10).

HOW DO WE ENDURE?

We base our endurance on hope. A runner will endure rigorous and painful training for the hope of winning the race. Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy of knowing that His death would conquer Satan and bring redemption to the redeemed for all eternity. The believer's hope is that by enduring trials, he will experience a greater measure of spiritual power in this life as well as rewards in Heaven.

This power includes the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, and peace. Scripture repeats this threefold sequence of the Holy Spirit in us, followed by tests resulting in the power of the Holy Spirit upon us. The Christian life begins with faith, then hope is needed during times of testing and tribulation. The result is genuine love.

The Filling of the Spirit	The Testing of the Spirit	The Power of the Spirit
1. The Spirit filled Jesus Christ at His baptism (Luke 4:1)	The Spirit led Him into the wilderness for testing.	Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14).
2. Jesus breathed on the disciples, and the Spirit filled them.	Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received power.	The Holy Spirit came upon them in power, and multitudes believed (Acts 1-3).
3. The Spirit filled Paul at his conversion (Acts 9:17-18).	Paul gloried in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distresses.	As Paul gloried in his infirmities, the power of Christ rested upon Him.
4. The Thessalonians received the Spirit through Paul's preaching.	They showed patience and faith in all the persecutions and tribulations they endured (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5).	Their faith grew exceedingly, and their love toward each other abounded (2 Thessalonians 1:3)
5. All believers receive the Spirit into their spirits at salvation (Romans 8:9-16) and can ask God to fill their souls with His Spirit (Luke 11:13)	The Spirit leads all believers into fiery trials, temptations and reproaches (1 Peter 4:12-14; James 1:1-3; Matthew 5:11-12).	"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you," (1 Peter 4:13-15, NAS).

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF ENDURANCE

- Elijah stood against the evil of his day, and received death threats from Queen Jezebel, but he stood faithful in the end (I Kings 19).
- King Herod put John the Baptist in prison because of his stand on divorce and remarriage, yet he remained faithful to his death (Matthew 11:11).
- Daniel maintained Godly standards during the reign of four kings. His enemies plotted his death, but endured to the end (Daniel 1:21).
- Luke endured with Paul to the end (2 Timothy 4:11).
- Demas failed the endurance test. Rather than serve Paul in prison, he left to enjoy the pleasures of this world (2 Timothy 4:10).

HOW DOES TRUTH MOTIVATE ENDURANCE?

Truth sets us free from the destructive attitudes and influences that diminish endurance. When trials and temptations come, we should endure them with the following four responses:

- 1. Thank God for each trial.** – We can give thanks for all things, because all things come from the hand of God. God uses them to teach us character. They also “work together for good to them that love God.” The Godly man, Job, endured a great affliction of trial, because he understood this point, “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).
- 2. Rejoice in all things.** – Once we recognize the benefits that God intends through our trials, we can rejoice in them. If we lack wisdom to discern these benefits, we can simply ask God for it and He will give it to us. (See James 1:2-5).
- 3. Cry out when necessary** – Some situations should not be endured, and God will bring relief when we cry out to Him. “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Ps. 50:15).
- 4. Overcome by doing good.** – “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

HOW STRONG IS YOUR ENDURANCE?

- Do you live as a soldier who is in the most critical spiritual war ever waged, or as a civilian in a time of peace, prosperity, and pleasure?
- Do you rejoice when rejected by those who do not follow the ways of God, or do you complain that you have to suffer for the beliefs and standards of true discipleship?
- Do you rejoice in being falsely accused and blamed for things you did not do, or do you become reactionary, defensive, and bitter toward those who question your integrity?
- Do you accept God’s chastening for things you have done wrong, or do you become discouraged and want to give up on the Christian life?
- Do you resist temptation and bring every thought into captivity, or do you easily surrender to the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the mind?
- Do you look forward to trials and persecutions so you can experience more of the power of Christ’s love, or do you have a fear of man and suffering?