

Endurance

Throughout the bible endurance is an essential part of people's development. It enables us to develop our character and find out who we really are. To endure means to suffer patiently or remain under trials. It is the decision to continue doing something difficult or continue dealing with an unpleasant situation for a period of time.

1 Cor 4:12 *We labour, working with our own hands. When we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, **we endure it.***

To persevere means to continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty or with little or no indication of success. It is similar to endurance but endurance implies more difficulty or more depth of difficulty.

Endurance is part of our refining process and there is a reward for facing our trials - the crown of life. **James 1:12** *Blessed is a man who **endures** trials, because when he passes the test he will receive the **crown of life** that He has promised to those who love Him.*

In 2 Cor 11:22 Paul lists all the trials that he went through. He had the Lords approval for what he was doing but he was experiencing great persecution while doing it. Prosperity can be part of Gods' approval but the refining process leads to strong character that survives to the end. Joseph spent time in slavery and in jail for something he did not do but he landed up well. David was chased round the desert and landed up well but Saul and Solomon who were just given the kingship did not land up well. Was life too soft for them?

In **1 Sam 30** David faced sudden disaster when his home town was raided. His men talked of stoning him "*But David found strength in the Lord his God*". He enquired of God, chased after the raiders and recaptured the wives and children. He was prepared to endure and it took a great deal of physical strength to keep going.

Jesus is our ultimate example of endurance. He did not just theorise about it but walked the path of suffering. We are commanded to put up with the suffering we go through.

1 Peter 4:1 *Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, **arm yourselves also with the same resolve** because the One who suffered in the flesh has **finished with sin**.* We should take inspiration from the suffering of our Lord. This verse puts our refinement in another way - finished with sin - it not longer has dominion over us. This is why we should not moan and groan but be glad when trials come our way.

James 1:2-4 *Consider it a **great joy**, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, **lacking nothing.***

Heb 12:3 *Think of Him who endured such opposition against Himself by sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and give up.*

We must not give up. Just waiting for heaven is a negative, faithless attitude. Scripture tells us to face our difficulties with endurance just as Jesus did. These sayings are useful to remember when we are going through trials, "while there is God there is hope" and "I want to live as long as God wants me to live - and live life for His glory".

The Cloud of Witnesses

Keep going because there is a cloud of witnesses (that we can't see) surrounding us. **Heb 12:1-3** *We are **surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses**, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and **run with endurance the race** set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.* In several places Paul likens our life to a race. Our lives are not to be passive but actively chasing after the Kingdom.

Endure for the Gospel

The need for people to be saved was a strong motivator for Paul to endure:

1 Corinthians 9:11-13 *However, we have not used this authority; instead we **endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.***

2 Timothy 2:10 *This is why I **endure all things for the elect**: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

Western Influence!

Many people in the west enjoy an affluent, materialistic lifestyle. The media and society push us towards expecting a soft lifestyle. If we are aware of its influence we can guard our hearts and make decisions that are in line with the Lords direction.

When not to endure.

Don't go looking for lions. If there is no reason for us to endure suffering then we should make efforts to avoid it. We are not into suffering for the sake of suffering. When Paul was about to be flogged he asked, "*is it right for you to flog a Roman citizen who has not been tried*" – he escaped the flogging as a result. In another place he asked for his winter coat to be brought to him.