

GROWING IN ENDURANCE

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this sermon is “Growing in Endurance.” The question we’re going to wrestle with this morning is this: How does God want us to respond to adversity? How should a Christian respond to trials, affliction, sickness, the death of a loved one, persecution, hard times, suffering? This morning we’re going to find the answer.

TEXT

2 Peter 1:5-7 (CSB) 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, 7 godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

In this passage we are commanded to make every effort to cultivate eight virtues: Faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Today we’re going to zoom in on endurance.

The first thing to notice is that we are commanded to cultivate endurance. We are commanded to endure. We’re commanded to make every effort to grow in endurance.

WHAT IS ENDURANCE?

So what is endurance? Before I give you the definition, let me begin by saying that endurance is the Christian response to adversity. Endurance is how God wants us to respond to hard times.

WHAT IS THE WRONG RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY?

Let’s begin by describing the opposite of endurance. Let’s look at what endurance is not. Let’s look at the wrong way to respond to adversity.

1. Drop out of church.
2. Get angry with God for allowing you to suffer, especially after all you’ve done for Him.
3. Deny the faith altogether because you conclude that if God existed then He would not have allowed you to suffer.
4. Trust in sin to save you. Lie, cheat, steal, or kill in order to rescue yourself.
5. Turn to sin for comfort. Drugs, alcohol, binge-eating, pornography, sexual immorality.

6. Drop out of ministry. Quit the ministry that God has called you to.
7. Give up on, or lose sight of your goals – short-term and long-term.
8. Mistreat others. Get really grumpy and take out your pain on your family, friends, and coworkers.
9. Get depressed. Throw a pity party and walk and live with perpetual frown.
10. Commit suicide. It's the ultimate cop-out.
11. Complain. Complain to everyone you encounter about how bad you have it.
12. Rebel against your parents. Blame your parents for your unhappiness and get the back by doing things to hurt them and make them angry.
13. Stop reading your Bible.
14. Stop praying.
15. Refuse to forgive the people that have caused your suffering.
16. Worry. Let worry cause you to skip meals, lose sleep, and be miserable all day long.
17. Neglect your health. Stop eating right, and exercising, and getting plenty of rest.
18. Abandon your responsibilities. Leave your spouse. Abandon your kids. Flake on your commitments at church. Stop caring for your parents. Quit your job. Stop paying your bills.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY?

Those are the wrong ways to respond to adversity. What is the right way to respond to adversity?

Endurance. **Endurance is doing what is right despite adversity.**

The Greek word for “endurance” is *hupomeno*. Different Bible versions translate *hupomeno* different ways, because it has many synonyms: Endurance (CSB); Steadfastness (AMP); Patience (KJV); The ability to hold on (ICB); Patient endurance (LEB); Passionate patience (MSG); Perseverance (NASB); Wait and do not give up (NLT); Go on doing what is right, even if it is hard (WE).

Just reading the definitions of these synonyms for “endurance” is inspiring and instructive.¹ Endurance is the fact or power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way. Steadfastness means resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering. Perseverance means steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. Stand firm means to be emphatic or resolute and refuse to budge. Fortitude means courage in pain or adversity. Persistence means firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. Hold fast means remain tightly secured; continue to believe in or

¹ Definitions are from Google.

adhere to an idea or principle. Staying power is the ability to maintain an activity or commitment despite fatigue or difficulty; stamina. Determination means firmness of purpose; resoluteness. **Charles Swindoll** defines it as “deciding to hang tough, regardless.” Hang tough means be or remain inflexible or firmly resolved.

Endurance is stick-to-it-iveness. It is no-matter-what-ness. It is the ability to take a hit, like the great boxing champ George Foreman. It is the ability to take a lickin’ and keep on tickin’. It’s the ability of a plant to survive the harshest conditions. It’s the ability of a tree to stand tall through a category five hurricane. It is the ability to hold on without letting go, to run without stopping.

William Barclay translates *hupomone* “unswerving constancy.” He wrote, “Chrysostom called *hupomone* ‘The Queen of the Virtues.’ In the Authorized Version it is usually translated patience; but patience is too passive a word. *Hupomone* has always a background of courage. Cicero defines *patientia*, its Latin equivalent, as: ‘The voluntary and daily suffering of hard and difficult things, for the sake of honor and usefulness.’ Didymus of Alexandria writes on the temper of Job: ‘It is not that the righteous man must be without feeling, although he must patiently bear the things which afflict him; but it is true virtue when a man deeply feels the things he toils against, but nevertheless despises sorrows for the sake of God.’ *Hupomone* does not simply accept and endure; there is always a forward look in it. It is said of Jesus, by the writer to the Hebrews, that for the joy that was set before him, he endured the Cross, despising the shame (Heb 12:2). That is *hupomone*, Christian steadfastness. It is the courageous acceptance of everything that life can do to us and the transmuting of even the worst event into another step on the upward way.”²

Commenting on Hebrews 12:1, **MacArthur** wrote, “Endurance is the steady determination to keep going, regardless of the temptation to slow down or give up.”³

Commenting on Romans 5:3, **MacArthur** said, “Sometimes translated ‘patience,’ this word refers to perseverance, the ability to remain under tremendous weight and pressure without succumbing.”⁴

The New Testament scholar **Thayer** says endurance is “the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.”

² William Barclay, Commentary on 2 Peter 1:3-7

³ MacArthur Study Bible, note on Heb 12:1

⁴ MacArthur Study Bible.

The Greek Word *hupomone* literally means “to remain under.” The idea is to remain under the weight of trials without letting them crush you. One commentator wrote, “The idea of enduring is not just to “grin and bear it” but to remain under trials in a such a way that we glorify God as we learn the lessons the trials are meant to teach us, instead of seeking ways to get out from under the trials and be relieved of the pressure.”⁵

The person who has cultivated endurance understands that difficulty is not an excuse for depression and defeat. Suffering is not an excuse for surrender. Calamity is not an excuse for cowardice and compromise. Set-backs are not an excuse for self-pity. Resistance and rejection and roadblocks are not an excuse to run away.

Admiral Peary attempted to reach the North Pole seven times before he made it on try number eight.

John Creasy received 743 rejection slips from publishers before one word was ever published – he eventually published 560 books, which have sold more than 60 million copies.

Ephesians 4:29 “No foul language should come from your mouth....” Christians want to glorify God with our words, so there are many words we don’t use – curse words, dirty words, mean words, gossiping words, slanderous words, harsh words. The person who has cultivated endurance has erased other words from his vocabulary: Give up; Lose heart; draw back; retreat; surrender; grow weary; burnout; flake; get tired; quit; compromise; backslide; run away.

Endurance is doing what is right despite adversity.

6 WAYS YOU NEED TO ENDURE

As a Christian there are five specific ways you need to endure.

1. Remain in the faith despite adversity.

When the going gets tough, some people get angry with God and then end up denying the faith altogether. I mentioned this one earlier. Some people think, “How could God allow this to happen to me, after I’ve done so much for Him.” Others conclude that God must not exist because if He did, He wouldn’t allow them to suffer in this way.

⁵ Preceptaustin.org

This is a very real danger, which is why the Bible commands us to stand firm in the faith. **1 Corinthians 16:13** “Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.” When the going gets tough, cling to your faith in God. Do not let go.

One of the most helpful one-liners that I’ve picked up along the way about suffering goes like this: “I don’t know why, but I know God.” I don’t know why God is allowing this suffering, but I know God. I know He is good. He is in control. He loves me. He sees what I’m going through. He is going to be with me every step of the way. And this is part of His good and perfect will for my life. It is for my good and His glory.

2. Remain in Christ despite adversity.

The second way you need to endure is to remain in Christ despite adversity. In other words, no matter what you go through, keep abiding in Christ. Keep that close connection, that close relationship with Christ. Stay spiritually engaged. Keep doing the things that help you stay close to Christ. Keep reading your Bible. Keep praying. Keep having a daily quiet time. Keep going to Home Group. Keep going to church. Keep serving in ministry.

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.”

God wants to give you strength, and wisdom, and grow you through your difficulties. But for that to happen you need to stay close to Him. You need to remain; to abide.

3. Remain Christlike despite adversity.

When hard times hit, you need endurance to remain Christlike despite adversity. To resist temptation. To stay loving, and kind, and joyful, and patient, and gentle, and faithful.

John MacArthur writes, “That is, patience or endurance in doing what is right, never giving in to temptation or trial. Perseverance is that spiritual staying power that will die before it gives in. It is the virtue that can endure, not simply with resignation, but with a vibrant hope.”

Remember that endurance is the ability to remain under. It is doing what is right even when it is hard. It is being loving in the most unloving conditions. It is being patient when it would be natural to be impatient. It is being joyful when negativity is expected.

In the later years of his life, Churchill was asked to address a class at his old preparatory school and share with the young people present what he believed to be the secret of his great success in life. He stood before the assembly, leaning on his cane, shaking a little, and said with a

strong voice, “I can summarize the lessons of my life in seven words: never give in, never, never give in.”⁶

That’s endurance. Even in the hard times, don’t give in to sinful attitudes or behaviors.

Galatians 6:9 “Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up.”

THE WORLD NEEDS MEN

John Catoir, What a Day This can Be

Who cannot be bought; whose word is their bond; who put character above wealth; who possess opinions and a will; who are larger than their vocations; who do not hesitate to take chances; who will not lose their individuality in a crowd; who will be as honest in small things as in great things; who will make no compromise with wrong; whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires; who will not say they do it ‘because everybody else does it’; who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as prosperity; who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hardheadedness are the best qualities for winning success; who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular; who can say ‘no’ with emphasis, although all the rest of the world says ‘yes.’

4. Remain faithful in marriage despite adversity.

A fourth way you need to endure is to remain faithful in marriage. Marriage can be heaven on earth, but it can also be hell on earth at times. Still, God’s will is for us to have enduring marriages. For richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, ‘till death do us part.

Matthew 19:6 “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Don’t Quit, by Clinton Howell

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you’re trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low, and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh.
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.

Life is queer with its twist and turns
As every one of us sometimes learns,

⁶ Brian Tracy, *Goals*, 265

And many a failure turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.

Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,
It's when things seem worst,
That you must not quit.

Don't quit on your marriage. You don't really get to the best parts of marriage until you go through hard times together. That's when you really get to know each other, and learn to love each other, and learn to be more loveable.

Paul J. Meyer said, "Ninety percent of all those who fail are not actually defeated. They simply quit." I believe that's true with ninety percent of failed marriages. They didn't actually get defeated. Their marriage didn't actually fall apart. They just quit. Don't quit on your marriage.

5. Remain on mission despite adversity.

A fifth way you need endurance is to remain on mission despite adversity. God has given each of an assignment; a ministry; a way to serve Him by serving others. And when the going gets tough, it can be tempting to quit. Don't quit.

1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

The story of Gladys Aylward is a great example of remaining on mission. When she was in her twenties she was working as a maid in London. During that time she sensed God calling her to devote her life to be a missionary to China. But when she applied to the missionary societies, they all rejected her. She seemed to old – 28, and she didn't seem smart enough to learn and master the Chinese language. But she didn't quit on God's calling. She decided to send herself. She worked hard and saved up enough money to buy a one-way ticket to China. In 1930 she set sail, packing only some food, a blanket, and an orange coat. When she arrived in Asia, she had to travel all the through Siberia in order to reach Yangcheng. There she helped to establish an orphanage. A few years later, in 1938, when the Japanese invaded China, she didn't run away and quit. She led 100 children on a journey through the mountains and across the Yellow River

to safety. Not one child was lost or killed, even though they had food or supplies. And by the way, Gladys Aylward was only 4 ft. 10.

No matter what life throws at you, don't quit the ministry that God has called you to unless He tells you to quit. Just keep going.

6. Remain in pursuit of God-given goals despite adversity.

Finally, you need endurance to remain in pursuit of God-given goals. Throughout your life God will give you goals. These will be burdens that God will place on your heart to do something, such as lose weight, get in shape, get a college degree, write a book, start a business, etc. But when hard times hit, whether it is sickness, failure, rejection, resistance, opposition, it is very tempting to quit. **John Maxwell** said, "I once heard that 91 million Americans make New Year's Resolutions, but that 70 million Americans break those commitments within a week!" That's why you need endurance.

Hebrews 12:1-2 "Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us"

One person said, "Persistence is the willingness to move forward in your goals in spite of unrelenting hard work, unanticipated obstacles, and unexpected setbacks."

The **Reformation Study Bible** defines endurance as being "in constant motion toward the goal despite opposition."⁷

Einstein once said, "It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer."

The late Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Charles Krauthammer provides an inspiring example of this. Krauthammer became a quadriplegic in medical school following a freak diving accident. Rather than wallow in self-pity, Krauthammer resolved to finish his medical studies from his hospital bed. He did – and without missing a single semester!⁸

Supposedly, Thomas Edison had about 1,000 failures when he was inventing the lightbulb. When asked by a reporter how it felt to fail so many times, Edison is said to have replied, "I didn't fail one thousand times. The lightbulb was an invention with one thousand steps."

⁷ Note on Hebrews 12:1

⁸ <https://www.prageru.com/videos/building-resilience-5-ways-better-life>

Shortly after the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon's soldiers at the Battle of Waterloo to compare the courage of his soldiers with that of Napoleon's. He said, "My soldiers weren't braver than enemy's, they were just braver five minutes longer."

One time I heard the story of a softball coach who gave her team a pre-game motivational speech. She said, "Don't quit fighting. If they knock your teeth out, gum 'em to death." That's endurance. Stick with your goals.

Brian Tracy said, "The history of the human race is the story of the triumph of persistence. Every great man or woman has had to endure tremendous trials and tribulations before reaching the heights of success and achievement. The endurance and perseverance is what made them great."

I love the words of President Calvin Coolidge. "Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education alone will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

HOW TO CULTIVATE ENDURANCE

Proverbs 6:6-8 "Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest."

Do you know why the ant gathers its food in the summer? Because it knows that winter is around the corner, and during the winter it can't survive the cold, so it has to stay underground.

The way to cultivate endurance is to prepare for the winter during the summer. That's the purpose of summertime. To prepare for winter. Life isn't going to be all bad. You will have seasons of ease, success, comfort, victory, peace. Those aren't the times to take it easy and be lazy. Those are the times to prepare for the coming winter. So the way to endure the next series of trials that come your way is to prepare for them now.

What you do in the summer will determine how you respond in the winter.

How can you cultivate endurance and prepare for winter?

1. Learn what God's word says about adversity.

The main reason people don't have endurance is that they don't know God's word. They don't know what the Bible says about adversity. And they don't know God's promises. If you don't

know God's word, then you are going to have unrealistic expectations. You might expect that God is supposed to keep you out of trouble, or always rescue you from trouble. So when hard times come, or they linger, or they end in death, it will crush you. So to cultivate endurance you need to learn what God's word says about adversity.

Let me give you the most important Bible insights about adversity.

a. Trials are to be expected.

John 16:33 "You will have suffering in this world." Being a Christian doesn't mean you won't suffer. In fact, being a devoted Christian can mean might make your life harder in many ways.

b. We won't always be rewarded or rescued in this life.

John the Baptist was a righteous, devoted man. He was a fearless preacher of the word of God. For such faithfulness, you would think that God should have given Him a Range Rover and a house in River Ranch. That's not what happened. Herod had him arrested, put in chains, and imprisoned. Then what happened? Surely God would rescue His servant, right? Wrong. At the request of his wife, Herod then had John beheaded.

I know. That's a depressing story. But here's the point. God allows His children to suffer. And we won't always be rewarded and rescued in this life.

c. God is in control.

This is called the sovereignty of God. God is in charge of everything that happens. Acts 17:11 calls Him the Lord of heaven and earth. **Psalms 135:6** "The Lord does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths." **Isaiah 14:24** "The Lord of Armies has sworn: As I have purposed, so it will be; as I have planned it, so it will happen." **Isaiah 46:9-10** (CSB) "Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like me. 10 I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will." Here's the point. Nothing can happen to you unless God allows it. God decides which trials you will face, and how long they will last. Trials do not mean that God is not in control; it means that trials are God's will; they are a part of His plan.

d. God loves you.

1 John 4:8 "God is love." **1 Peter 5:7 (CEV)** "God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to Him." This has two applications. First, trials do not mean that God does not love you. It's like a

parent. Just because a parent spans a child, or allows a child to suffer does not mean that the parent is unloving. Just because God allows you to suffer doesn't mean He doesn't love you.

Second, if God is in complete control of what happens to you, and if He cares about you and loves you, then that means your suffering is what is best for you. Your suffering, in the long run, is what is best for you.

Let me put it this way. God always does what is best for you. So if God allows you to suffer, then your suffering is what is best for you.

e. God will use this for your good.

Romans 8:28 "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." We don't always know how, but we can trust that God will always use our suffering for our good.

f. God will use the adversity to grow you.

One of the main purposes of adversity is to grow us. **Romans 5:3-4** "3 And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope."

C.S. Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasure but shouts to us in our pain."

Thomas Watson said, "God is a sanctifying good. He sanctifies all our comforts and turns them into blessings.... He sanctifies all our crosses. They shall not be destructive punishments, but medicines; they shall corrode and eat out the venom of sin; they shall polish and refine our grace. The more the diamond is cut, the more is sparkles. When God stretches the strings of his viol, it is to make the music better."

Pain is the best teacher. Unfortunately, there are some lessons, and some character traits that we cannot learn without suffering.

2. Develop deep friendships in the church.

The second way to cultivate adversity is to develop deep friendships in the church. Why? Two reasons. First, you will develop endurance as you witness other Christians go through difficult times and watch how they handle them. And second, you will need those Christian friends when you go through adversity. Church family is one of God's ways of strengthening us for the hard times.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 “9 Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. 10 For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. 11 Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? 12 And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.”

When Rita died last year, it was such a blessing to have our church family surround us with love and care and encouragement.

3. Draw near to God.

2 Corinthians 1:4 “He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” God has unlimited resources to help you when you go through hard times. Comfort. Wisdom. Strength. But how do you tap into these resources? We receive these resources through prayer and the word. When we go through hard times, we can seek the Lord in prayer and the word and receive the strength that we need. So when you go through hard times, this is not the time to drop out of church and stop reading your Bible and praying. This is the time to be more consistent at church, and to spend more time in prayer and in the word.

4. Set the right goals. To glorify God, not to be comfortable and successful.

To cultivate endurance you need to have the right goals. If your goals are comfort, pleasure, ease, luxury, success, winning, good health, then you will not handle hard times well, because adversity is the opposite of those things.

But if your ultimate goal in life is to grow in Christ and to glorify God, then you are much better prepared to respond well to adversity.

Warren Wiersbe wrote, “Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to consider trouble as an opportunity for great joy. If we live only for the present and forget the future, then trials will make us bitter, not better. If we respond well, however, testing works for us.”⁹

When you go through hard times, instead of asking “Why me?” or “Why is God allowing this?” ask “How can I glorify God through this?” and “How can this situation help me to grow?”

5. Keep your eyes on eternity.

⁹ Transformation Study Bible, Note on James 1:2-4

Finally, to cultivate endurance you need to keep your eyes on eternity. Remember that we aren't always rewarded or rescued in this life. But God will rescue us and reward us in the next life. **Galatians 6:9** "Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up."

Remember that no trial lasts forever. We will eventually overcome in this life, or in the next. And in heaven, there will be no hardship; no pain; no suffering; no tears. All joy in God's presence with God's people, for all eternity.

When you remember that no trial lasts forever, and that heaven is waiting for you, you can endure anything.

CONCLUSION

So how does God want us to respond to trials? Endurance. Do what is right despite adversity. Don't let hard times derail you, or discourage you, or distract you, or deter you, or defeat you. Keep doing the right thing. And remember, if they knock your teeth out, gum 'em to death!