

Endure to the End

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Date: 22 February 2009

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[0:00] What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?! By no means we die to sin. How can we live in it any longer?

! We too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again.

Death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[1:24] Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

I ask you to turn over in your Bibles to 2 Timothy in chapter 2. I have a question for you professing believers tonight.

Those who have professed faith in Christ who believe that you are following Christ. In your Christian walk, has it ever seemed as though you just won't be able to make it to the end?

It's too hard. It's too painful. It's too much work. It's too difficult. And there's too little benefit. I hope that you don't often feel this way.

[2:37] But I would guess that if we're honest, we would have to answer yes. At times, I felt like throwing in the towel and quitting. I felt like Timothy. I've gotten so discouraged that I wanted to give up on the whole thing.

And it seems as though Paul saw Timothy perhaps thinking in that direction. And so he includes in his letter another of his faithful or trustworthy sayings.

He's got five of them. And one that we all often remember. There's a faithful saying. It's a faithful word. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost.

It's worthy of all acceptance. Well, here's another faithful saying. One that perhaps Timothy already knew. One that was probably common already in the early church. But a reminder to Timothy to encourage him to endure to the end.

It's in verses 11-13. Notice them with me. You have 2 Timothy 2, 11-13. Here is a trustworthy saying. If we died with Him, we will also live with Him.

[3:40] If we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us. If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.

The words are almost poetic. They're rhythmic. They're perhaps a portion of an early hymn in the church or a poem or a baptismal confession that was used in the church.

You sometimes hear us quote a hymn as we preach. Well, Paul, it appears, is doing that here with Timothy using these words to remind him, to encourage him that he must persevere to the end, even if he feels like giving up in the middle of the race.

And so tonight, if you're a professing believer in Christ, there's an encouragement to persevere. Stay faithful to the end. And there's a warning against falling away.

Don't quit. Don't give up. Don't deny the Savior. And so it doesn't matter if you've just begun your Christian walk and you see a long journey stretching before you, or if you're near the end of your walk with Christ because your life is drawing to a close or anywhere in between, just looking to finish the race well.

[4:55] There's two possible outcomes for those who profess faith in Christ. You'll persevere to the end or you'll show by your life that you were never truly a believer in the first place. There's perseverance or there is apostasy.

And so which will it be for you? Will you endure to the end? Or will you quit partway there? As we consider these two very different outcomes, may God encourage us, may He challenge us to endure, to persevere until the end.

We'll talk about perseverance, apostasy, and which will you do? So, perseverance first of all. And we want to see three things about it from this faithful saying.

We want to see its necessity. We must persevere. We want to see its certainty. We will. If we are true believers in Christ, we will persevere. And then we want to see its reward.

We begin with its necessity. It begins in the words, if we died with Him, we will also live with Him. You start to see the necessity of persevering to the end right there.

[5:58] We begin with death with Christ. Romans 6, I read for us earlier, is an expansion on these words. These words are just a condensation of Romans 6. If we died with Him, we will also live with Him.

And our Christian walk starts with death with Christ. It starts with death to sin. That puts us on the path on which we're walking. And so we're talking about persevering in this path.

This is the beginning of it. It's death with Christ, which is a death to sin. So we live in sin no longer. We're no longer slaves to it. It doesn't reign in our mortal bodies. We don't give our bodies as instruments for wickedness anymore.

We're dead to sin. That's the path that we've started down. It's in this way that we must persevere. Now, I'm talking primarily to believers tonight, to those who profess faith in Christ.

But for those who don't, you're not a believer. You've never started down the path in the first place. We're talking about perseverance. You don't have anything to persevere in because you haven't started in that way at all.

[6:56] I just want to say one thing. Start. Start the race. If the runner doesn't start the race, there's nothing to finish. And I would encourage you tonight to run to Christ, to get into Christ, to die to your sin, and to self, and to put your trust in Christ, and to hope in Him, and to start this race.

You're going to hear tonight that perseverance is hard work. It's not easy. There's all sorts of things you're going to have to endure. But it's worth it. There's a reward. We'll talk about that tonight as well. Get on the path, on the way that leads to life.

Start the race. But if you profess to already be on the path, are you persevering in it? Are you really dead to sin? At conversion, there is a radical break with the past, with what you once knew.

Are you living that way? Did you hear the disbelief in Paul's voice in Romans 6, 2? We died to sin. How can we live in it any longer? Father, you've been freed from slavery to sin.

Don't go back. Imagine a prisoner. He's set free from prison. He's completed his sentence. And he walks out of the prison and he's a free man. And no prisoner in his right mind would turn around and say, I don't want to be free.

[8:07] And walk back in and become a prisoner again. Paul is in prison right now. A Roman prison. If he got out, he's not going to go back of his own accord to being enslaved.

No, he's free. And so why would you, having been set free from your sin, go back to it? Jesus saved you. Why would you continue in the very sins that caused his death, that caused such intense agony and sorrow for him?

Sometimes people get out of prison. They've been incarcerated for a long time and they get out and they don't know how to live on the outside. And there's a pull. They almost want to go back and they'll do something to get caught to go back.

But a wise person that gets out of prison feel that pull and they say, no, it's not worth it being in prison. I'd much rather be a free man. And so they'll do whatever it takes to stay out of that prison. They'll learn how to live as a free man again on the outside. They'll get some job training. They'll get some counseling. They'll surround themselves with a support group to make sure that they don't go back if they're wise.

[9:13] And so maybe you're saying, I'm dead to sin but I still feel that pull. That's how I always lived. That's what I want to go back to. Well, if you're wise, you'll seek to find help on the outside.

Away from slavery to sin. We'll get into God's Word and see what the life of a living follower of Christ looks like. I say, what does it look like to live as a free man? I'm going to read this Word. I'm going to find out.

You'll seek out others who are wiser and get counsel from them. You'll surround yourself with a support group. You'll find a church and get involved in it and find people that will pray for you and support you and sustain you because you're dead to sin.

So whatever it takes, you're not going to go back. You've died to sin. It's not optional. It's why we speak of the necessity of persevering. We must press on. When you feel sin rearing its ugly head trying to come back to life, you remind yourself that you're dead to that filth that has no portion with you any longer.

Slay those besetting sins. Put them to death. Live as you are. Dead to sin. And alive to Christ. And so, if we've died with Him, we will also live with Him.

[10:21] I think that's a reference to this life right now. Life with Christ. Life in Christ. It refers to perseverance. We died to sin. We're going to live with Him. Parallels in Romans 6 make that clear that as we walk through this world, alive to God in Christ, offering ourselves to God, to members of our bodies, as instruments of righteousness, instead of selfishly loving me, living in my box all of the time, we pour out our love to others.

We think about what's happening in their lives and how we can be a blessing to them. That's dead to self in life with Christ. Instead of self-indulgence, self-sacrifice is the order of the day for the follower of Christ.

We no longer blaspheme Christ, but suffer for the honor of His name. Instead of mocking those who follow Christ, we join with them, we support them, we encourage them in that way. You see, we have a changed identity.

We don't live for us. We live for Christ. This is how it must be. If we have died with Christ, we will live with Him. We must continue in that path. Think with me of a caterpillar for a moment.

Caterpillars are ugly to my way of thinking. Maybe somebody thinks they're cute, but I think they're kind of ugly. They're wrinkly and they go along and they eat their leaves. But then one day, they spin that cocoon around themselves.

[11:42] And when they come out, there's not an ugly caterpillar anymore. It's a beautiful butterfly. Stunning in their color. Symmetry in the way that God has made them. Is that butterfly, as it were, a new creature?

Very different from the one that went into the cocoon. Does that butterfly ever go back to the cocoon and come back out a caterpillar? No. It doesn't. It's a butterfly now.

It can't go back. It can't reverse the process. It's died to its old way of life and there's no way it will or can go back and neither can we. We've died to sin. The caterpillar is dead and gone.

We're beautiful butterflies now and we're to live that way. Dead to sin. Alive with Christ. No longer living the way we once did.

That is the way we must press on in. And so Paul says, he goes on in verse 12, if we endure, if we persevere. The theme that Timothy needed, that we need hammered home.

[12:43] Finish the race. Endurance is something that we must have daily, hourly, moment by moment. You can't, in the Christian life, you can't make it to the end of the week and then say, I'm going to take a break from enduring.

I've made it. I can take a, I'm going to relax a little bit. I'm going to do something different. There's no weekends in the Christian life. You know how weekends like and how you look forward to it.

You work hard all week. You go, you go, you go, you endure, you persevere. And then you get to the end of the week and say, I'm going to take a break. I'm going to relax a little bit. I'm going to do something different. Instead of working on the job, I'm going to work in the yard and that's going to, it's going to feel nice.

It's relaxing. It's a change, a switch. It recharges us to do something different and get us on our way. But walking the path to heaven, you don't get to stop enduring. You can't take a little break at the end of the week and fall in with the world for a while.

Go back to your sin for a time. Do something different. And relax a little bit. I know you've got to endure to the end and you can't stop. Now thankfully, in the Christian life, there's times when we

can come apart from some of the things that make it so difficult to endure.

[13:46] We've got a Lord's Day. Don't we set apart? A day where we dedicate it as holy to the Lord so we come apart from the world. Many things out in the world that make it very difficult to endure.

We've got a day where we can come apart and be with God's people and find encouragement and new energy fresh from God's Word as we gather with His people away from the world and temptations. But even right here at church, we have to endure.

We can perhaps block out the world for a few moments here, but you know what comes with us in here? Our own flesh. And the devil comes with us here. He doesn't want us to endure here.

And so we can't ever take a break from enduring, from pressing on, pressing on, faithful to the end. And so He's going to come with us and He's going to try to distract us and He's going to try to convince us of all sorts of things so that we won't benefit from the time that we spend here so that when we go back out into the world, enduring even more, we won't be ready for it.

That's what Satan wants. But even right here, we can't let our guards down. Not for a moment. We must endure, persevere to the end. What do we have to endure?

[14:55] All sorts of things the Scripture points us to that we must endure. We're going to have to endure. As believers in Christ, we're going to have to endure the world's hatred. Jesus told us.

Matthew 10, 22. All men will hate you because of Me, but He who stands firm, that's our Word, He who endures to the end will be saved.

The world's going to hate us. We're light shining in the darkness. And so when light gets up next to the darkness, it exposes the darkness. And people who live in the darkness are going to see you. When you draw near them, they're going to see their sin and how ugly it is.

And they're going to hate that. And they're going to hate you for being that light. And so you'll have to endure the world's hatred and you'll have to endure it to the end. You hear the necessity of endurance in Jesus' words.

If we would be saved, we must stand firm to the end. We'll have to endure tribulation or affliction. Suffering. Paul says in Romans 12, be joyful in hope.

[15:53] Patient. That's our Word. Enduring in affliction. Faithful in prayer. And it's not as though Timothy could say, alright Paul, it's not like you're calling me to endure, but you don't know what I've been through, Paul.

I'm enduring things that you've never seen before. Things here in Ephesus. Things are really hard here. I'm enduring affliction like you've never seen. Well, he couldn't accuse Paul of that. He couldn't accuse Paul of being a hypocrite.

Paul was in prison as he's writing the letter. You get just a glimpse of something, of what Paul endured. The affliction that he endured. Endured in 2 Corinthians 11.

Just listen to this. It's remarkable. You think you have affliction. You listen to what Paul endured for a moment. He says, I've worked much harder. Been in prison more frequently.

Been flogged more severely. And been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the 40 lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

[16:49] Three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I've been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers. In danger from bandits. In danger from my own countrymen. In danger from Gentiles.

In danger in this city. In danger in the country. In danger at sea. In danger from false brothers. And he's not done. I'm out of breath, but he's not done. I've labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep.

I've known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Paul endured affliction. And so we can't say, Paul, you don't know what you're talking about. Endure to the end.

You don't know what I face. Yes, he does. He's endured worse. We'll have to endure affliction. If we would make it to the end. We'll have to endure trial.

In temptation. James 1 verse 12. Blessed is the man who perseveres. That's our word. Endures. Under trial. Because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life. That God has promised to those who love him.

[17:46] Before you get the crown. Before you get the glory. There's got to be the endurance of the trial. The temptation along the way. Harsh treatment will be our lot. 1 Peter 2 and verse 20.

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. We're not doing anything Jesus himself hasn't done when we endure suffering and persecution for Jesus' sake. He endured it before us. And we as his followers must and will.

As long as we live in a Christless, Christ-hating world, I don't have to tell you tonight. You know you're there. You're living in the world. You're enduring it. The hymn writer says, is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God?

And the applied answer is no. This vile world is an enemy to grace. You're going to have to endure if you would receive the crown and make it to the end. It's like an Iron Man.

[18:54] An Iron Man triathlete. You know what a triathlon is? It's three events. You swim and you ride a bike and you run. And I can't begin to imagine what it must be like to endure a triathlon.

It's 2.4 miles of swimming. I do well to swim across the pool. 2.4 miles of swimming. How many lengths of the pool is a mile?

One of you swimmers is telling me. 64 lengths. Times 2 plus .4. Whatever that is. It's a lot of lengths of the pool. 2.4 miles to swim.

112 miles on the bike. 26.2 miles of running. That's a marathon. Hard enough just to run a marathon. You try to do it after you've swum 2.5 miles and run or ridden your bike another 112. Then you go run a marathon. That's an Iron Man. And so an Iron Man, if he's going to get to the finish line, and he doesn't get to be called Iron Man until he gets to the finish line, you're not one unless you make it.

[20:00] And so if he's going to receive that title, Iron Man, he's going to have to endure. To the end, he's going to have to endure a current. I've talked to an Iron Man that lives here in Bremen, and he did his in Louisville, and they swim in the Ohio River.

It's just gross. But anyway, I used to live on the Ohio. And they swim in the river, and for part of that time, they swim against the current. They swim upriver. Not the hole, but part of it.

He's going to have to endure that current. Or if it's one where it's in the ocean, you've got to endure the waves. He's going to have to endure the heat. He's going to have to endure the burning suffering that comes as his muscles run out of oxygen and begin to produce lactic acid.

And it builds up, and it burns. He's going to have to endure the hills that he has to run up, and that he has to ride up. He's going to have to endure the thoughts of his own mind telling him to quit.

And before all of that, he's got to endure months, and months, and months of training. Sacrificing time, effort, the food that he might want to eat, but can't, and more.

[21:03] He's going to have to endure if he wants to make it to the end. It won't be easy. It's one of the most difficult, physically demanding things that you can do. And so in our Christian walk, we must endure all these things that we've spoken of to make it to the end.

And along that way, there's going to be bumps along the road. The road of death to sin and life to Christ, we find that perseverance is not perfection.

We find that doing battle with sin that remains is messy business. We sometimes find ourselves slipping and falling. The iron man I talked to said towards the end of the bike ride, he began to black out.

He almost quit. He almost thought about not starting the marathon. But he found renewed strength and pressed on it. There's going to be difficulty along the way.

And I think that's what Paul is talking about in verse 13. Where he says, if we are faithless, he will remain faithful. And there's a contrast, I think, with the end of verse 12.

[22:11] Verse 12, he says, if we disown him, he will also disown us. That's the apostasy we're going to talk about in a few minutes. If we disown him, that's permanent. It's final. There's no repentance from that because he disowns us.

But if we are faithless, endure periods of faithlessness where our faith grows weak, where we stumble back into sin, he remains faithful. He's not going to abandon us.

In those bumps along the road, he will remain faithful. There's a difference between the end of verse 12 and the start of verse 13. And we see it in the response of Jesus.

But the response of Jesus to our temporary faithlessness from which we repent, from which we are restored, is to remain faithful to us. And that's part of enduring and persevering to the end.

And if you've walked the Christian life for any period of time, you know that you've endured periods of faithlessness or weak faith. How do you know that? How do you know that you're acting without faith?

[23:10] Well, it's the moments that we spoke of at the very beginning where it seems like there's simply no way that we'll ever make it. The temptation is too strong. The road is too long. The obstacles are too great.

It's how Timothy was feeling. Maybe you've come here tonight feeling that way. As though you can't make it to the end. That's faithlessness. I won't say that to beat you down tonight.

There's encouragement here. But that's what it is. It's how we feel when we turn our eyes away from Christ and towards ourself and our own strength. And of course we feel hopeless. Of course we feel weak when we look at ourselves because we are weak.

We're showing we're not believing Christ and His promises. A life of faith, rather, is one of fixing our eyes on Jesus. Hoping and trusting in Him. And so our faithlessness is seen in our doubt.

Our worry. Our fear. Our forgetting of God's previous faithfulness to us. We're like Peter.

Remember Peter? He's walking towards Jesus on the water.

[24:07] His eyes are fixed on His Savior. It's a glorious moment. A remarkable moment. A moment of strong faith for Peter. Have you been there before?

You're on the mountaintop. You're experiencing the fullness and richness of God's blessing. You've entrusted yourself to Him in a great trial and you've found Him faithful. You're soaring.

You're walking on water, as it were. But! And why does it seem that so often there's a but that follows that experience? But you look away from Christ.

Peter starts to look at the wind and the waves. And He begins to sink. And you stumble down the mountain. Maybe you've forgotten to look at Jesus.

Maybe it's overconfidence in yourself. You think, I made it through the last trial. Fine, I'll make it through this one. And you stumble. And down the mountain you go. You've forgotten to take your eyes or put your eyes on the Savior. Maybe it's fear.

[25:04] Maybe it's forgetfulness. You forgot that you just got through a trial with the help of the Lord. How am I going to get through this one? And down the mountain you come. But you need that look of the Savior.

That gentle but stern rebuke. Oh, you of little faith. Why did you doubt? That was a moment of faithlessness for Peter. We've had them. But Jesus remains faithful.

And restores us. Enables us to persevere on that way. We demonstrate our lack of faith when we give in to temptation. When we sin. We show that we're not really believing the promise that God is able to give us strength to bear up under the temptation.

To provide a way of escape from it. We don't remember how we've died to that sin and are living for Christ. Peter even goes so far as to deny Christ. Most small was his faith.

But what do we find? We find that Christ restores him. Even Peter's denial wasn't final. It wasn't that denial we read of here at the end of verse 12. Because he repented and Christ restores him.

[26:05] There's comfort here for us for the times that we've been ashamed of Christ. For the times that we have had weak faith. He faithfully, gently restores us. It's not an excuse to more faithlessness.

Oh, it doesn't matter if I'm faithless. Jesus will pick me back up. And it doesn't matter. That heart is one that's begun to disown Christ. And says that you don't need him. One that says, I don't care if I'm faithless.

Jesus is faithful. I'll be okay. That's not the heart of one who is persevering in the way. And so, perseverance is necessary.

We must persevere. If we've died to Christ, we will live with him. We must live with him. We must walk with him to the end of the road. But secondly, notice with me about perseverance at certainty. For those that have died to sin and live with Christ, we will persevere to the end. That's not based on our hard work, but it's based on the faithfulness of the one we serve.

[27:04] You notice how different this line in verse 13 is from the rest of the faithful saying. The second part about Christ's faithfulness is not dependent on the first part of the phrase as it is with the others.

See, in the first parts of it, we live because we died with him. We live with him because we died with him. We'll reign with him because we endure. He'll disown us because we disown him, but he is

faithful not because we are faithless.

He is faithful in spite of our faithlessness. And so we need it because he is faithful. Why? Because he cannot disown himself. There's the reason for our perseverance, the reason that it's guaranteed, not because of our strength, but because of his faithfulness.

He remains faithful. He abides faithful. Our endurance is thanks to him. Those moments of faithlessness on our part, without Christ there to turn us back in the way, to reveal himself to our eyes of faith once again, without his sustaining grace, his powerful hand, those moments of faithlessness would turn into an ultimate, unrepentant disowning of him.

It's good. He doesn't reciprocate our lack of faithfulness. He is faithful because he can't deny himself. Everything that Jesus is, everything that he has promised to be for his people, he can't deny.

[28 : 27] He can't disown. He won't take away. He can't disown his own word that's full of promises of faithfulness to us. That can't change. Our brother said it.

The word of the Lord abides forever. It can't be taken away from us. The atoning sacrifice that he made of himself cannot be denied. He can't disown the salvation that he has accomplished for us. He can't disown himself as our ever-present mediator interceding before God on our behalf. He will not abandon his lordship over all things for us, for the church.

His roles of prophet, priest, king, shepherd of the sheep cannot be disowned by him. He won't get tired of them. He won't change his mind on any of these things.

Indeed, he cannot deny or disown himself in everything that he is for us, his people. And that is why we'll persevere to the end because of what he does, not because of what we do.

[29 : 24] 1 Thessalonians 5.24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. The responsibility remains. We must persevere.

We must live with him. We must endure. We must bear all of these things, but it's not because of our work that we'll make it to the end. It's his faithfulness. We hold the two together.

We must endure and we will only endure because of his faithfulness to us. So go and do that work of endurance in the strength of Christ. So, it's necessity.

We must do it. It's certainty. And now, it's reward. All this talk of suffering. All this talk of enduring. The difficulty of it. The impossibility of it apart from Christ.

But is it worth it? Is it worth it? You ask an Iron Man if it was worth everything he endured to cross the finish line and to have that title of Iron Man and he'll say yes.

[30 : 26] Is the blessing of a good marriage worth all the difficulty along the way? Everything that you have to sacrifice? Yes. Good grade.

Worth all the effort that you put in. All the hard work and studying. Infinitely more so. The reward that awaits those who persevere in Christ is worth it. Verse 12.

If we endure with Him, we will also reign with Him. We'll reign with Christ. We'll not just live in heaven with Christ.

We'll reign with Him. I don't fully understand what that means. I don't think we will until we're reigning with Him. But I know that it is a blessed and glorious thing to which we look forward with eager anticipation.

It's the promise of Jesus Himself. Revelation 3.21 To Him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.

[31 : 29] In our human way of thinking, we say, oh, that won't be good. That's way too many kings. Too many cooks spoil the pot or however the saying goes. Too many kings ruin the kingdom. So we'll be like Congress.

We won't get anything done. No, no. It won't be anything like that. I don't know exactly what it will be like, but it won't be like Congress. Because our wills will be aligned with that of Christ.

His desires will be our desires. We will be of one mind, one heart as we reign with Him for all of eternity. Instead of rebelling against Him in conflict with each other, we'll be united as one, reigning with Him, delighting in His presence.

And we could talk about the other glories of heaven. There's no suffering. There's no sin. There's no temptation. None of these things that we have to endure, none of those will endure in heaven because they'll be done.

We'll have finished the race. We'll have crossed the line. We'll have gained the crown. There's a blessing. Jesus said, Blessed are you when men persecute you. And of course, He's right.

[32:40] There's a blessing coming for those who endure. We read it in James 1 and verse 12. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial when he has stood the test. He will receive the crown of life that God has promised.

There's a reward waiting for us. I want you to see this with your eyes. Turn with me to Hebrews 10 for a moment. You can keep your place there in 2 Timothy. We'll be back. But look at Hebrews 10 just for a moment.

There's this call to perseverance. And notice with me just beginning in verse 32. Look for perseverance and reward here.

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light when you stood your ground. That's our word. Endured. When you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insults and persecution.

At other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

[33:48] So, do not throw away your confidence. It will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised.

For in just a very little while He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith and if He shrinks back I will not be pleased with Him.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed but of those who believe and are saved. Here at perseverance and with it comes reward.

Rich reward. Even if your property is confiscated. If you have to endure that in this life you have something far better waiting you in the life to come.

There's a reward for perseverance. Now if that athlete doesn't finish the race or if he finishes it but not according to the rules he cheats, he cuts corners, he doesn't get the crown, he doesn't get the victor's crown, he doesn't get the title Iron Man.

[34:53] And if you don't persevere to the end living for Christ, you won't receive that victor's crown either. You can't expect to receive the crown if you haven't borne the cross. You can't climb over the wall and find a shortcut to the celestial city.

You've got to enter by the wicked gate and persevere through everything that Christian did along that path. There's no shortcuts. Or as we like to say, no pain, no gain.

John Stott says, blessing comes through pain, fruit through toil, life through death and glory, through suffering. So there's reward. But we will have to endure to get there.

Sometimes we get so focused on the here and the now, on the enduring, that that's all we can see. And that's when we begin to get discouraged. All we can see is the next step in front of us. You're running that race as an Iron Man and the finish line isn't in sight for a long, long, long, long time. And so maybe you lose sight of the goal and all you can think about is I'm tired. I've endured too much. I can't make it. But Paul here sets before us the goal. Don't lose sight of where you're headed.

[36:02] Don't lose sight of the glory that's coming. All this enduring is with good purpose. One day, there will be no more enduring. No more suffering will be with Christ.

And so don't get so discouraged by the enduring that you forget its outcome. Well, there's some words on perseverance enduring, its necessity, its certainty, and its reward.

Think briefly with me on the horrifying alternative of apostasy not enduring to the end. Along with the encouragement to persevere comes a sober warning against falling away.

And notice with me its possibility and its punishment. First, it is a possibility for those who profess faith in Christ.

You see what Paul says in verse 12. If we disown him, he will also disown us. Simply the fact that it's written here, if we disown him is an indicator to us that it is a possibility.

[37:04] You see why Paul has been so concerned to exhort Timothy. Don't give up. Don't be ashamed. Press on. Don't give up on this truth, this good word that I've given you because anything else will lead to destruction.

Don't stop. If we're ashamed of Jesus, we're on the road to disowning him. And so don't become so comfortable that you let your guard down.

Dear people, I want you to look around tonight at the people sitting in the chairs beside you and take a look at yourself tonight. Right here in these chairs, it's possible, but it's possible that there is

one who will deny our Lord and will be denied by Him because of it.

That's possible. And I'm not just talking about people that haven't professed faith in Christ. I'm talking about professors. Those that we believe to be believers. And if that troubles you or you think I'm wrong, you need to hear the testimony and the warnings of Scripture about those that apostatize, those that depart from the faith, those that gave every appearance of being followers of Christ and yet didn't persevere to the end because they didn't have the root of the matter in them. We could look at several passages in Hebrews to this effect. 2 Peter 2 and verse 1, but there were also false prophets among the people. Just as there will be false teachers among you, they will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying, that's our word, disowning the sovereign Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.

[38:44] You can look at 1 John 2, 22 and 23. And it's not as though it will be obvious to us. Oh, I'm... that one, because it's so clear. There's no fruit there.

Sometimes that would be the case, but these will be people that we thought were believers when Jesus around the Passover meal with His disciples said, one of you will betray Me, everybody didn't go, oh, it's Judas.

That's obvious. No. Nobody knew who it was. There is a possibility that those who profess faith in Christ will deny Christ.

Listen to Spurgeon. Dreadful if. If we disown Him. Dreadful if. And yet an if which is applicable to every one of us.

If the apostles, when they sat at the Lord's Supper and said, Lord, is it I? Surely we may sit as we may say as we sit here, Lord, shall I ever deny Thee?

[39:43] You who most loudly say, though all men shall deny Thee, yet I will not. You are the most likely to do it. It's possible.

God, keep us from it. God, guard our hearts. God, keep us from ever being so proud and arrogant that we think we're beyond stumbling in our own strength.

God, keep us with our eyes fixed on Christ. How do you disown Jesus? How do you deny Him? Perhaps we most easily think of with our words or with our lack of words, we can deny Him like Peter did or keep silent when we should speak like the rest of the disciples that had already abandoned our Lord last night.

Thankfully, we see that theirs was not a permanent denial. They were restored. They repented. They were forgiven. But you can do it with your lips. I think more often we do it by the way we live. Like Judas did, denying his Lord, not just with his mouth, but he goes and he gets the purchase price. He delivers Jesus over. He denied by his actions. All the while, I follow Jesus skimming off the top of the money purse, denying by his actions.

[41:03] Titus 1, verse 15 and 16, To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

They claim to know God, but by their actions, they deny him. That's our word. They disown him. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.

In other words, you can't just talk a good game. You have to live it. Go read James 2 again. You can't profess to have faith and have no deeds that back it up. You've got to walk the walk.

We can deny Christ by our own thoughts so that no one else knows, but we know we can deny him with false doctrine, believing the doctrine of demons, false doctrine.

Later in this chapter, he's going to talk about two men named Hymenaeus and Philetus who were spreading the foolish teaching that the resurrection had already happened. And they caused many to leave the faith.

[42:10] They destroyed the faith of some, it says, in their own faith. We can deny him by false doctrine. You can be like Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or even Muslims who believe in Jesus.

Believe even that he was a good man and a great prophet and some of them, Jehovah's Witnesses, even believe that he's the Son of God. But they don't believe that he is God. And others don't believe that he's the Son of God.

You can deny him by your doctrine. Many ways that you can disown Jesus. Apostasy falling away, disowning him, is a possible outcome for the professing believer.

And its punishment is horrifying. It's not just no big deal. Something that doesn't matter. If we deny him, he will deny us.

If we disown him, he will disown us. We want nothing to do with him, he'll have nothing to do with us. Depart from me, I never knew you. We'll ring in your ear for all eternity.

[43 : 12] And remember that people will be surprised to hear that on that day. Because they gave every appearance, but the root of the matter wasn't in them. We'll be abandoned by him if we deny him.

If we walk away from Jesus, we have not promises and protection of Scripture. It's promised there. The threats and warnings, rather, will be ours. You see, it's only in Christ that we're safe from punishment.

Because he took the punishment in our place. And so if we deny him, we're embracing the punishment. We're embracing the curse for ourselves. We're saying that we want the wrath of God to be poured out on us instead of Christ.

And so if you're tempted to be ashamed, you're tempted to give up and give in to the temptation. Tempted to say, it's too hard. It's too tiring. It's not worth it. I can't make it until the end.

You remember the penalty for disowning Christ and quitting partway there. He'll disown you. Think on your eternity. An eternity of suffering is not worth a little comfort, a little ease, a little sinful pleasure here and now.

[44 : 19] But rather, our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. That's what we remember. And so apostasy is a real possibility for those who profess faith in Christ.

So which will it be for you tonight? Not much left to say except to ask, will you endure to the end or will you quit and throw in the towel?

When faced with seemingly overwhelming pressures and things to endure, what will you do?

Whether you're just starting out tonight, just a baby Christian, or you're almost at the end, there's a warning here.

Don't deny Him. Don't quit. Don't fall away. Jesus Himself warns, whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown Him before My Father in Heaven.

Don't be that one that seemingly walked with Christ for a time, but gave up and quit to your own destruction. Rather, endure to the end.

[45 : 28] Remember the words of Jesus in that same context in Matthew 10. He who stands firm to the end will be saved. He said, I can't do that. You're right. You can't.

And so remember Jesus. Hebrews 12. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. Hear that word?

Endured. Endured. Endured the cross, scorning at shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

How do you keep from growing weary in this perseverance? How do you keep from losing heart as you endure? You remember the one that didn't grow weary, that didn't scorn the shame of the cross, that endured the same things you endure.

Jesus. Fix your eyes upon Him. That's when our faith is strongest, when our eyes are on Jesus, not on the circumstances, not on the waves crashing all around us, but on Jesus. The one who can and will take us safely home.

[46 : 34] So look to Him. Remember what He endured for us, and in His strength, endure for Him to the praise of His name. Brothers and sisters in Christ, may God give us the grace, the power of Christ, to endure to the end.

And may He receive all the glory for it. Let's pray together. Our Father, we pray that You would take this Word and apply it appropriately to each heart.

Don't quench any smoldering flax or bruise any broken reed here tonight. May none who are truly clinging to Christ doubt their salvation tonight.

But if there are some who are complacent, who have grown satisfied and aren't seeing their sin and their turning away from Christ, we pray that You would stop them in their tracks, that You would shake them, that You would open their eyes and show them their need of perseverance and pressing on.

We thank You for the faithfulness of Christ tonight and that we can have sure confidence in Him, that He will guard and keep His people to the very end. And so we pray that You would challenge us and that You would encourage us, that You would rebuke us where it's needed.

[47:46] May we go from here trusting in Christ, fixing our eyes upon Him, enduring to the end, not turning aside to the right or to the left. Guard us, keep us, and do it for our good, but most of all for Your glory, that You might receive the praise for more trophies of grace brought in that have crossed the finish line, that have finished well only in Your strength.

Get all the glory and honor and praise we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.