

THE TEACHING  
**LEGACY**  
 OF DEREK PRINCE

## Character That Stands the Test

**F**or most of us, the days that lie ahead are going to test our endurance. They are not going to be easy. I really believe the challenge that lies ahead is the test of character and loyalty. If you and I will stand the test, we will come out like gold that has been tried in the fire.

In this letter I want to focus on one single word that applies to this test. That word is *endurance*. It is not a very popular word—nor one that is easily understood. Nonetheless, I believe we are living in times when it is increasingly important that we understand what it means to endure.

### A Needed Trait

Some of the English words from the King James Version of the Bible have changed meaning in the centuries since it was first translated. Where the KJV uses the word *patience*, we would today use the word *endurance*. And for *patience*, the KJV would use the word *longsuffering*.

Patience (or longsuffering) is being willing to put up with irritating people, situations, and circumstances without losing your temper—to remain composed and not fly off the handle. It

is a very valuable Christian virtue, and each of us could use more of that trait. Plain and simple, we all need to know how to endure.

By way of introduction to our subject, let's look at verses from two texts: Matthew 24 and Mark 13. Each of these chapters is a prophetic preview given by Jesus regarding the situation that would exist in the world immediately prior to His return. We see much of what Jesus spoke about being clearly manifested in the world today. My purpose in this letter, however, is not to explore prophetic interpretations. It is to focus on the one characteristic Jesus said we are going to need to get through days like this.

### A Clear Warning

In our first Scripture, Matthew 24:12–13, we see a clear warning from Jesus.

*“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”*  
 Matthew 24:12–13

Please notice there the direct connection between lawlessness and lovelessness. When people become lawless, they become loveless.



We often think of love as something free and spontaneous, requiring no laws and no discipline. That is incorrect. Love and discipline go hand in hand.

When discipline and law break down, love grows cold. The word for *love* in verse 12 is *agape*, which refers essentially to the love of Christians. Jesus is not talking about the love of the world growing cold, but the love of Christians growing cold.

In the midst of this terribly bleak climate—lawlessness abounding and love growing cold—Jesus says, “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” You and I have to endure to the end. The original Greek says, “He that has endured unto the end, it is he who will be saved.”

### A Somber Picture

In Mark 13:12–13, we see this warning repeated:

*“Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”*

This is a very somber picture of a degree of treachery and disloyalty that will be rampant even within family relationships. It also speaks of Christians being hated by all men. In both cases, the admonition is the same: *endure*. We must hold out. Sometimes holding out is all God asks you to do—and it can be a full-time job.

I met a Swedish missionary who had worked in France for many years. He told me of his visit to a prison near Marseilles in the south of France where the French Huguenots (the Protestants of that time) had been imprisoned for their faith. Many of them went into the dungeon there and

never came out alive. The missionary told of one cell in which the prisoner had engraved in the stone of the dungeon one single word: *résister*—the French word for *resist*. That was the message this believer had left to the others who would follow him. Resist.

Don’t give in. Hold out. Endure. I believe God is speaking these words to us today. I pray that the Lord, through His Word, will put steel in our souls and give us a spiritual backbone if we don’t already have one.

### The Fruit of Tribulation

Let’s now consider some very simple principles about how we can cultivate endurance.

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Romans 5:1–2

We rejoice because of what the future holds for us. But Paul goes on to say that we rejoice not only for what the future holds, but also for what the present offers—even though it is very different.

*And not only in that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*  
v. 3–4

Where verse 3 uses the word *glory*, the word in Greek means to *rejoice*, *boast*, or *exult*. Why should we exult in tribulation? Because of what tribulation does.

The New American Standard version says, “Tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.” Perseverance produces proven

character in us. This is the heart of endurance—character.

We rejoice (boast, glory, or exult) in tribulation because tribulation is the *only* factor that produces perseverance—and perseverance produces proven character. Throughout my life, I have walked with numerous brothers and sisters with whom I have shared hardship, opposition, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding—even misunderstanding between them and me. But today, for me, their character is proven. I know I can trust them. In times of treachery and lawlessness, I want to know whom I can trust.

### What About Me?

First of all, though, I want to be sure that I can be trusted. You and I are well aware of the daily pressures that tempt us to serve ourselves at the expense of others. Wouldn't we be horribly ashamed if pressure could make us unfaithful or disloyal to brothers and sisters to whom we are committed in the Body of Christ?

In this regard, let's look at the first chapter of Colossians:

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy . . . . Colossians 1:9–11*

Isn't it wonderful to know that God wants you and me to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding? Paul gives the reason: "that you may walk worthy

of the Lord." Let's keep in mind that when we are filled with the knowledge of God's will, it will affect the way we live. It will even affect how we handle adversity.

It is one thing to suffer long; it is quite another thing to suffer long *with joyfulness*. It takes endurance and strength to do that. Patience and endurance are marks of strength; they are not marks of weakness.

### It's a Marathon

Let's now look at Hebrews 12:1:

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

Here the writer of Hebrews envisions life as a race that has to be run. At the finish line there is a great throng of spectators waiting to see who will win. This throng of spectators is all the saints who have already finished their course and are waiting there ready to cheer for us from the balconies of heaven.

Where he says, "lay aside every weight," we must think in terms of this race. The runner empties his pockets and wears the lightest, most flexible clothing he can. He doesn't carry a single, unnecessary ounce of weight. We need to remember that some activities are not sins—but they are weights that can burden us down and hold us back. They exhaust our strength or lure us into spending too much time and attention on them.

Remember, this is not a sprint. It is a long, deliberate race. The characteristic that is required is *endurance*. Many people start off the Christian life as if it were a dash. A little while later, they are panting beside the track. They are worn out, and

they have hardly even begun the race.

*The race is not to the swift,  
Nor the battle to the strong . . .*  
Ecclesiastes 9:11

It isn't speed or strength that counts—but endurance.

## Building Character Together

One of the great tests to really check our character is the test of close, committed *fellowship*—such as the small group where you meet every week with the same people and share your life with them. After a little while, it becomes uncomfortably clear to you that there are some areas of your life that have never really been dealt with. You realize that when you weren't too close to people or too intimate, you could cover up these areas. But when you are involved week by week in regular, intimate, close fellowship, you either have to back out or correct your life.

My friend Bob Mumford once said, “Suppose there are ten areas in our character that need to be changed. You can probably deal with six yourself. But the remaining four are going to

need other people to put their finger on.” I think that is a pretty good average.

If I do not open myself up to others, I can deceive myself about areas of my character. But committed fellowship doesn't afford me the same opportunities to deceive myself. Somebody once said fellowship is “roof off, walls down.” We don't mind getting the roof off, because God sees through the roof anyhow. But what about getting the walls down and letting people see?

There is no greater test of our Christian character than *close fellowship*.

In my next letter we will explore this theme further. For now, let's meditate on the Scriptures we have covered and ask the Lord to help us build *a character of endurance*. As we close this letter, why don't we take a minute together to bring that request to Jesus?

*Lord, I want to develop character in my life.  
Since that can be a long process, I realize  
it will take endurance to accomplish it.  
Please help me, Lord. Pour Your grace and  
strength into me to complete this process.  
Amen.*



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