

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

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 Endurance Through Focus

In light of the heightening turmoil and tumult in the world around us, the theme for our current Teaching Legacy Letter series is appropriate: “Standing Strong.” Clearly, if we are to stand strong in the days ahead, we will need the quality of endurance in our lives.

In one of our previous letters, “Character that Stands the Test,” we began to explore the nature of endurance. We saw from both Paul (in Romans) and James that endurance through testing builds character. If you and I will hold on through the test, it will surely shape every aspect of our character and personality—with very few areas exempted. These tests will make us complete, fully rounded Christians.

I also pointed out that most of our character-shaping tests come in the context of close, committed fellowship. When we don’t allow ourselves to get close to people, you and I can cover up the cracks in our character. But when we are exposed to regular, intimate, vulnerable fellowship, we are forced either to back out or face up to what God is addressing in us. I believe there is no greater testing site for our Christian character than close fellowship.

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 Clear Evidence

For this month’s letter, we will begin our study on “Endurance Through Focus” with a Scripture in which Paul relates endurance to ministry:

Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.
 2 Corinthians 12:12 NKJV

In this verse, Paul lists the first evidence of an apostolic ministry—not as miracles, but perseverance. The true apostle is the one who hangs on when everybody else gives up.

When Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy, his support group was obviously dwindling. In this, his last epistle, probably written just shortly before his death at the hands of a Roman executioner, he says:

Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. 2 Timothy 4:9–11 NKJV



Right at the end, Paul’s coworkers deserted him as he suffered in prison. What did they lack? Endurance. What was the true mark of the apostle? Endurance. This quality comes before miracles. Some people may be able to work miracles, but they may not have endurance.

Not “If” but “When”

What are the types of tests we will have to go through? In Matthew 13, Jesus tells the well-known parable of the sower who went forth with the seed. He speaks about the different kinds of soil, each representing a different type of person who hears the Word of God.

Some of the seed fell by the wayside and never entered into the ground—it was eaten up by birds. Some fell on rocky ground. Some fell amongst thorns. (Some of the seed also fell on good soil and thrived.) After telling the parable, Jesus went on to describe the type of person represented by each kind of soil. There is nothing profound in this; it is very simple:

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”
Matthew 13:19–21 NKJV

Please notice one little word there: *when*. Jesus did not say *if* persecution or

tribulation arises—He said *when* tribulation or persecution arises. Be assured of this: they will arise.

“Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” v. 22 NKJV

Two Kinds of Tests

Very simply stated, there are two kinds of tests: when it is too hard, and when it is too easy. The first is persecution; the second is riches. Some people can’t stand the persecution. Other people can’t stand the prosperity. You and I need to be able to stand both tests.

Some people can make it when they are persecuted, but when God blesses them—the beautiful home, two cars, the boat—they get much more wrapped up in the attractions of this world than in the kingdom of God.

There are others who receive the Word with joy. They are tremendous. These people pop up the first night after they get saved to give their testimony. Then they get baptized in the Holy Spirit, speak in tongues, and prophesy. As the saying goes, they are like a house on fire. But three months later, no one knows where they are. Why? Because the moment opposition and trouble came, they just wilted away. They had no root. I am sometimes concerned when a new Christian starts too quickly. In some ways, it would be better for them to have a little struggle at the beginning.

When I worked as a pastor in London, it was a major victory just to get one person

baptized in the Holy Spirit. During that time, I observed that for every ten persons who were baptized in the Spirit, one would stand. The rest would fall away. In those days when opposition was so intense, it was only the people who had to struggle and fight who were the ones you could rely on. It was only the ones who had to struggle every inch of the way. They stood the test and they stand today.

So, please bear this in mind: you are going to be tested by tribulation, and you are going to be tested by success. You have to hold out through both.

Strong in Purpose

At this point, I want to offer two suggestions from the Bible on how we can achieve endurance. The first is that you and I must make our commitment to Jesus Christ wholehearted—without any reservations.

Please consider the words Barnabas spoke to a group of new Christians in the city of Antioch in Syria.

When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.
Acts 11:23 NKJV

“Purpose of heart” is the key phrase there. You make up your mind that you are going to stick with the Lord regardless—no matter who does or who doesn’t. If your friends don’t, you will. If your family doesn’t, you will. That is purpose of heart. No matter what happens, you are going to continue with God.

In Acts 14:22, we again find Barnabas and Paul exhorting new converts in Antioch in Pisidia, another city of the same name.

...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

It is hard to find another way into the kingdom of God other than through tribulation. You likely will be subjected to pressure in every area of your life. You might say, “Why does it happen to me?” Here is the answer: because God is preparing you for the kingdom.

When people come to the Lord, we owe it to them to warn them. They need to know that as they move into the kingdom, it will be through tribulation and opposition. I believe it is unfair to tell new converts (as some do) that when they come to Jesus, all their problems will be solved. Rarely, if ever, will it work out that way.

How Moses Endured

The second principle of enduring comes from one of my favorite passages of Scripture: Hebrews 11:27. Moses grew up in Egypt and was destined to inherit the throne as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He had everything the world could offer—education, wealth, social privilege. At the age of forty he turned his back on all those benefits. He fled from Egypt and spent the next forty years looking after a few sheep on the back side of the desert. What a test of character!

By faith [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.
Hebrews 11:27 NKJV

In this one short verse we discover the essence of endurance: seeing Him who is invisible. How do we see that which is invisible? What faculty enables you and me to see it? The answer is faith. Faith is related to the unseen. Faith is a sure conviction concerning things not seen (see Hebrews 11:1). If you and I are going to hold out, the unseen world will have to be more real to us than the seen.

Focusing on the Invisible

Paul picks up this same theme in 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 when he talks about his “...light affliction, which is but for a moment.” When we seriously consider what Paul went through, those words should make us pause before complaining about affliction. Paul was beaten four times, stoned once, shipwrecked twice, and left to die. He endured hunger, thirst, nakedness, and peril. To all that, he says:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are

not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary [they are not truly real, they don't last; they look glamorous, seductive, exciting, and thrilling, but they are not permanent], but the things which are not seen are eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:17–18 NKJV

You and I may never be required to go through the extreme trials and testing that Moses and Paul went through. Our circumstances may be entirely different than theirs. Even so, we will need endurance to face them. And that endurance will come as we focus—not on the circumstances around us, but on Him who is invisible and upon that which is eternal.

Would you like to join me now in a short prayer to adjust your focus in that way?

Dear Lord, I want to be a disciple whom You can trust to endure tribulation, persecution, and difficulties when they come. Help me at those times to keep my focus on You and upon the eternal realm. I ask You now to strengthen me in my character and resolve, so that by Your grace, I will glorify You in every way through my endurance. Amen.



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