

Endurance is Essential



Endurance (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

First of all, let me say thank you to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write—even if it's only a brief personal note.

Now tell me, do you think that there's such a thing as an unsuccessful Christian? By that, I mean someone who has made a commitment of his life or her life to Christ and who sincerely wants to be successful as a Christian, and yet somehow, never really makes it. Do you perhaps know people like that in your own circle of acquaintances? Permit me to go one step further with my question. Are you perhaps such a person? You have committed your life to Christ and you do sincerely want to be the kind of Christian that's portrayed in the New Testament and yet the fact is, you really are not successful.

Let me begin by assuring you of one thing—that God has made all necessary provision for you to succeed as a Christian. Therefore, if you are not succeeding, it must be that you are not availing yourself of the provision that God has made. You see, there are a number of different elements which go together to make up a strong, successful Christian character, and if any one of these essential elements is lacking in your character, you will never be able to achieve the success you desire. It's like baking a cake. If one of the essential ingredients is missing, you can go through all the procedure of baking, but the cake will never turn out right.

In my talks this week I'm going to deal with one of these essential elements that go to make up a strong, successful Christian. Further more, if as you listen to me, you become aware that this particular element is indeed lacking in your character, I'm going to tell you how you can make up the deficiency, how you can acquire this element in your character.

I wonder if you can guess what I have in mind? Quite probably you can't—so let me tell you. It's endurance—or

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perseverance. Either word is used in various translations but they usually translate one and the same word. So think in terms of endurance or perseverance.

Now I want to turn to a passage in Matthew, chapter 24 where Jesus sketches a vivid, prophetic picture of what the world will look like as the present age draws to a close. The world we see around us today corresponds in many respects to this picture. As I read the words of Jesus I invite you to consider in your mind how many of the things that Jesus mentions are very obviously present in our contemporary civilization. This is what Jesus says in Matthew 24, verses 6 through 13:

> "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of my name. And at that time many will fall away [from the Christian faith] and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved." (NASB)

That's not a very pleasant picture of what the world's going to be like. There are a lot of evil things, frightening things. But Jesus points out, the one essential requirement to come safely through all of that and to find salvation is there in that last verse that I read, "The one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved." The essential key, both to survival and to success, is in that last phrase, "the one who endures." The key requirement is endurance.

We could turn also to a parallel passage in Mark's Gospel, chapter 13, verse 13. It's a similar passage referring to the same situation. Jesus says there:

> "You will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." (NASB)

Notice there, it's put in the past tense, "the one who has endured to the end." In other words, you don't know you've made it until you've made it. You've got to get there before you can be sure. So you have to have endured to the end to come through into salvation in its fullest sense.

We see then that endurance is essential, especially in the times in which we are living, and my personal view is that the times are not going to get any easier. Endurance is essential for survival and for success. So we're faced with a very important practical question. How can we cultivate endurance? How can we be sure that we have this essential ingredient in our total makeup?

I'm going to turn to some words of Paul in Romans, chapter 5, the first five verses, 1 through 5:

> "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. [That's the entrance into the Christian life. We're justified; we're acquitted of our guilt and our sin; we're received on the basis of our faith; we have access into the grace of the Christian life. Now Paul speaks about what lies after we've gained access. He says:] We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [That's our eternal future that we see before us and it fills us with joy. But in the present, Paul goes on to say, things may not altogether be like that.] Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, [I wonder whether you've ever considered that sentence, "We rejoice in our sufferings." Is that how you respond to suffering? It's a paradoxical response, but Paul has a reason for saying it. He says:] We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [or endurance] perseverance, character; and character, hope." (NIV)

In other words, perseverance is so essential that we're willing to go through the sufferings which alone can build perseverance in us. Suffering produces perseverance or endurance; perseverance produces character. You see, we're talking about a complete Christian character, and character produces hope, an attitude of steady optimism. Hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us, and then we become vessels for the love of God.

You see, let me give you a simple illustration. You can mold a pot of clay and it can be the right shape and you can try to put something into it, like a fluid, but if it's not first baked in the fire, it won't be firm; it won't be solid, and it will be porous. The water will leak out. That's like our character. We

cannot contain the love of God in our hearts until we've become a fire-baked vessel and the fire that bakes the vessel and makes it hard, enduring, and able to contain what God puts in it is the fire of suffering. So we rejoice in suffering; suffering produces perseverance (or endurance), endurance produces character; character produces hope, and we become vessels for the love of God.

Just one more word about endurance before I close this message. I want to turn to the epistle of James, chapter I, verses 2 through 4. James says this:

> "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, [again, we have to pause and ask ourselves, is that how we react to trials; do we consider it pure joy? Why? For the same reason that Paul gives: Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.] Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (NIV)

James is saying essentially the same as Paul. He says when we face trials, opposition, difficulties, suffering, we should count it pure joy. Why? Because of what's coming out of it. Trials and testings produce perseverance or endurance. And when endurance has been allowed to do its full work, then we become mature and complete, not lacking anything. You see, that's the goal; that's what God is after; that's what we have to be after in our own lives. We have to unite with God in His purpose for us which is to produce a complete, full-rounded, successful Christian character, and that's described in those three words, or three phrases, "mature" (grown-up), "complete" (not lacking anything), and then James goes ahead and says, "Not lacking anything." Do you want to be the kind of Christian who's not lacking anything? Then you have to go through the process. The process is trials and testings. As we go through these, it's like the vessel that's been baked in the fire; it strengthens us. It gives us real strength, stability, and the ability to contain what God wants to put in us. And then out of endurance comes maturity and completeness, and we're no longer deficient in any character or aspect that's required to make us successful Christians.

Well our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking on *training for the race*.

Radio Program

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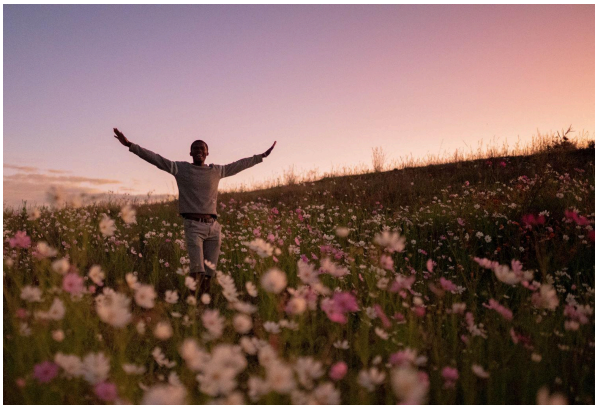

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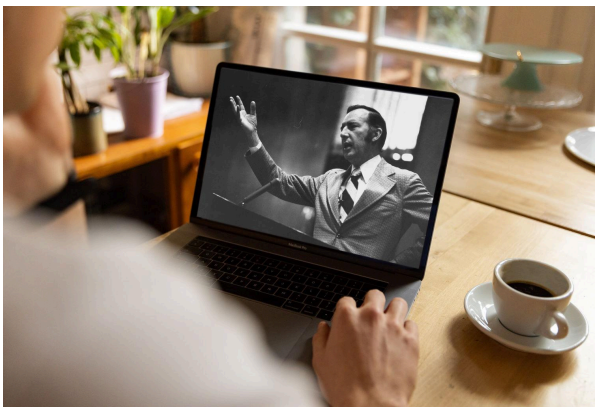

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