

Steps to Achieving Endurance



Endurance (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our vitally important theme: Endurance.

I've been saying in my previous talks that endurance is an essential part of Christian life and character and that endurance has to be cultivated through tests and trials. There's no other way to produce endurance but through testing and trials.

In my talk yesterday I turned to the well known parable of the sower and out of it I extracted the two main kinds of tests that we face. The first kind, when things are too hard, the second when things are too easy. There were three groups of people in whom the seed of the Word of God began to produce results. But there was only one group in whom the result was a crop. The first group in whom there were results was the seed that fell on rocky ground. Those were people who gave up when things were too hard. The second group was those the seed that fell among the thorns, but the thorns sprung up with the seed and choked its crop—those were people who lost out when things were too easy. It was the worries, the pleasures, and the riches of this life that hindered them. And then the fourth group that produced a crop did so, it says, by persevering. So we've seen that endurance or perseverance is essential.

Today I'm going to share with you a vital, practical lesson, how to achieve endurance.

It's not enough to know that we need endurance. It's important that we also know how to achieve endurance. I believe that achieving endurance can be presented in four main steps, and I'm going to speak about the first two steps in my talk today. In tomorrow's talk I'll deal with the remaining two steps to achieving endurance.

So now, here's step 1 to achieving endurance. I state it this way: Make a firm, unreserved commitment to the Lord right at the beginning of your Christian walk, or wherever you are right now.

I remember once, years back, there was quite a well-known actress who had heard the gospel. She'd led a sinful life. She was a well-known personality in the particular country in

which she lived, which was Sweden. She was confronted with the claims of Christ which went exactly contrary to her career, her ambitions, her old friendships and so on. And the minister who led her to the Lord related this. He said that as she knelt there and prayed, she said to the Lord, "Help me to say an unconditional 'yes' to you." That's what I mean when I say, make a firm commitment. Say an unconditional "yes." "Yes, Lord, from now on I'm committed to you; whatever you ask, whatever you say, that's sufficient for me; I have no alternatives; I've closed the door; I've locked the door and thrown away the key to any other way; I'm committed to you." I believe that's absolutely essential. Some people make that commitment when they first meet the Lord. It happened that way with me. I had no alternatives. I had to make a total commitment or never make it. So I can say really, I made that commitment at that time and I've never looked back. I've had problems. I've had difficulties. I've had periods of weakness. But I have never looked back. I said an unconditional "yes" to the Lord the first time He spoke to me. So, but if you've gone on in your Christian life, but you've never made that commitment, then make it right now. Make it today, because as long as you're wavering in your commitment, there'll be no real endurance in your Christian life. You'll be up one day and down the next.

Just today, as a matter of fact, I was talking to a young lady who told me that she'd had a problem with hopelessness. She was kind of feeling that she wasn't making progress, things weren't going right. The Lord gave me a word for her. He said, "The thing is that the Lord is dealing with you about your priorities." First and foremost, you need to be eternally grateful to the Lord that He's saved you, saved you from hell, saved you from your sins, that He's bestowed upon you the priceless gift of eternal life. When you're really excited about that, when you see that that's more important than all the other things put together, when you really value your salvation properly, then I think the other things in your life will be straightened out. So, what I'm saying is, make that total, unreserved commitment and show the Lord that you appreciate what He's offering you.

Let me take a couple of examples from Scripture, about new believers and how the leaders of the New Testament Church ministered to them. First of all, in Acts, chapter 11, it says that at Antioch (in Syria) a large number of people turned to the Lord. And then we go on in Acts 11:22 and 23:

> "The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. [They said to themselves, "These new believers are going to need good instruction and help right at the beginning of their Christian walk and Barnabas is the man we feel can help them." Verse 23:] When he [Barnabas] had come and witnessed the grace of God [seen all that God had done] he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord." (NASB)

Where the translation says, "with resolute heart," the literal wording is, "with purpose of heart." In other words, it's a decision. That's what I'm talking about, that initial decision, commitment to the Lord, without reservation. Lock every other door; throw the key where you'll never be able to find it. You're committed to the Lord and His way. There are no options. That's commitment.

Later on there was a similar situation in some cities in Asia Minor—in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (in Pisidia)—that's not the same Antioch. That's not important. This is in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Acts 14, verses 21 and 22:

> "And after they had preached the gospel to the city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'" (NASB)

Notice, they didn't give them an easy message. They didn't say, "Everything is going to be easy from now on; Jesus will do all that you need." They said, "There's going to be a lot of problems, a lot of difficulties, make up your mind right now that you're not going to turn back when the difficulties come." It's that total commitment, that unreserved saying "yes" to Jesus which will see you through the troubles, opposition, the persecution, when they arise. And remember, it's when they arise, not if they arise, because they're coming.

That was step 1 to achieving endurance—make a firm, unreserved commitment.

Step 2 is this: Seeing the unseen. That's essential. There's a verse in Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 27 about Moses that has always touched my heart. It says this:

> "By faith he [that's Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen." (NASB)

Moses had to endure forty years of exile in the wilderness. He had to become a nobody after being a somebody. For forty years he had to tend his father-in-law's sheep in the backside of the desert. That wasn't easy. How did he hold

out? How did he not lose his faith and his vision? The Scripture's answer is, "He endured, as seeing Him who is unseen." We can only endure if we keep our eyes on the unseen world—God, and the eternal truth of His Word. If we're distracted by the things of time, if we take our eyes off the unseen, sooner or later, our endurance will waver. We see the unseen, which is a kind of paradox anyhow, isn't it, but a deliberate one that the Scripture uses, we see the unseen in the mirror of God's Word. It's when we look in the Word of God. Paul brings this out in 2nd Corinthians 3, verses 17 and 18.

> "Now the Lord is the Spirit; [capital S, the Holy Spirit] and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." (NASB)

Notice that. While we look in the mirror of the Word of God, we behold in it the glory of the Lord. And while our eyes are focused on the glory of the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord is moving upon us and transforming us into the likeness of what we are seeing, but, if we take our eyes off the mirror, then the Spirit no longer can work that in us. Paul goes on to relate this specifically to affliction and suffering in the next chapter, 2 Corinthians, 4:17 and 18:

> "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (NASB)

Notice Paul says, "Our momentary, light affliction is working something in us of eternal value," as long as what?—We continue looking at the things which are not seen. And he says, "The things which are not seen are eternal; the things which are seen are temporal,"—they're only transient, they're not eternal, they're not permanent. He says, "The condition of enduring and being changed and transformed as God wants us to be transformed, is keeping our eyes on the unseen, the eternal."

You see, in my talk yesterday, I spoke about the people in the time of Noah and Lot who missed out because, what?—they'd lost the vision of the unseen. They were absorbed in the things of time; marrying, being married, building, planting, sewing, reaping, buying, selling. There's nothing wrong with any of those things, but they've just taken their eyes off the eternal. So don't do that.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking on *two further steps to achieve endurance*.

Radio Program

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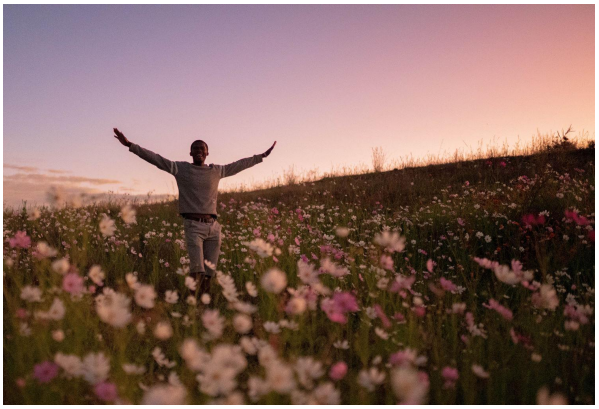

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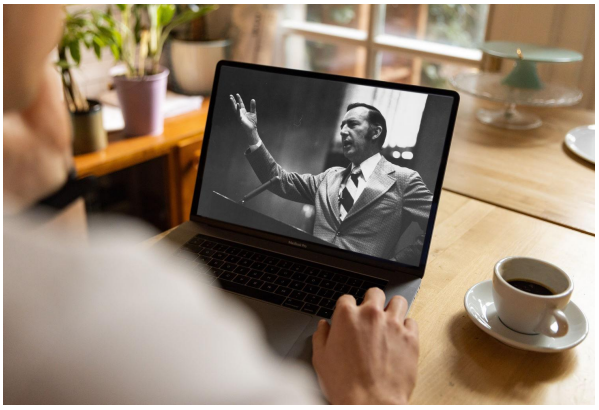

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