

Further Steps to Achieving Endurance



Endurance (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we draw near to the close of another week.

In previous talks this week we've seen that endurance is an essential element of a strong, successful Christian character, and that unless we cultivate endurance, we can never expect to be truly successful as Christians.

Yesterday I shared with you two important steps to achieving endurance; the first, make a firm, unreserved commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and I gave you the example of the actress who was torn between the claims of Christ and the world, and as she knelt and prayed, she uttered this simple prayer to the Lord: "Help me to say an unconditional 'yes' to you." That's what I'm talking about, saying an unconditional "yes" to the Lord.

The second step that I dealt with yesterday was, keep your eyes on the unseen. We looked at the example of Moses. He endured as seeing Him who is unseen. And Paul talks about looking in the mirror of the Word of God and seeing the unseen world, seeing the glory and being transformed into the likeness of what we see. And then he warns us that affliction will only continue to work in us this blessed result as long as we keep our eyes on the unseen. And he ends with this phrase, "The unseen things are eternal; the seen things are temporal or temporary or transient or impermanent." And we're dealing with the eternal and the permanent.

Today I'm going to share with you two more important steps to this goal of endurance. They follow on naturally from the first two, so step number 3 is this: Don't give up even if you fall. You say, "I don't want to fall." Well that's good, I don't want to fall either. But I tell you that most Christians do fall one way or another some time in the course of their Christian life. There are those that have made it without ever falling. I can't really say I'm one of them. But I can tell you this. When I did fall, I did not give up. I knew there was nothing to go back to, for one thing. So, face the possibility you may have some kind of a fall but make up your mind even if you fall, you're not going to give up. Actually it's really a kind of pride that would cause us to give up if we fall. We can be so disgusted with ourselves, we say, "Well, I can't make it; I'm not good enough, so I'm not going on." In other words, we've really been looking

to our own goodness rather than to the Lord's grace.

There's quite a number of scriptures about not giving up when you fall. Let me give you just one or two of them. Psalm 37, verses 23 and 24:

> "The Lord delights in the way of the man whose steps he has made firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." (NIV)

There's a kind of distinction there between stumbling and falling. And if you're a man whose steps the Lord has made firm, you may stumble, and if you were left to yourself, you would fall. But the Lord is holding on to your hand, so as you're just about to fall, that strong hand of the Lord lifts you up and sets you on your feet again. Now this is speaking about a man in whose way the Lord delights so it's not to be a failure. It's not to be a backslider. It's not deserving of contempt if we stumble, but God has made provision. He says, "If you stumble, you won't fall; I'll hold you up; don't rely on yourself; rely on the Lord."

And then there's another verse somewhat similar which goes a little further in Proverbs 24, verse 16.

> "For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity." (NIV)

Well that's a remarkable statement because it's talking about a righteous man. It says, "Even a righteous man may fall seven times." I haven't counted the number of times I've fallen but I could believe it could be seven. Seven is a kind of special number in Scripture. It's a very special number for me. I can't go into that right now. "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity. See, there's the difference. The righteous man has got something in him that says, "Go on; don't give up; get up; dust yourself off and start over again." But when the wicked is struck by calamity, that's the end. He's just brought down. He doesn't rise again. So the difference is not so much between whether you fall or whether you don't fall; the difference is how do you react when you fall. The wicked is just struck down. He makes no attempt to get up. That's the end. The righteous man, even if he falls seven times, rises again. He's got something in him that won't be held down. That's a commitment to the Lord. There are times when we just have to hold on in blind faith. There's nothing in our circumstances or situation or even in ourselves to offer us any physical encouragement, but we just don't give up.

I am continually reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus to Peter from the night before he went to his crucifixion. He said this in Luke 22, verses 31 and 32:

> "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. [You is plural there; it's all the disciples, and then He goes on singularly, He speaks to Simon Peter.] But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (NIV)

Now Jesus had just told Peter that Peter would deny Him three times that night. And then Jesus said, "Peter, I've prayed for you, not that you won't deny me, but that your faith won't fail." Would you have prayed that prayer? See, Jesus is a realist. There are times when He sees we're headed for a fall. He may not pray, "Father, don't let him fall." He may pray, "Father, don't let his faith fail." See what I'm saying. Even if you fall, don't give up. Even if you can see no visible reason for holding on or going on, just go on believing. Don't give up. Hold onto your faith. The Bible says it's much more precious than gold. Don't give up.

Well, let's go on to step 4 in achieving endurance. Step 4 I entitle this: Remember the prize-giving! Some people like the thought that there's a reward for serving God. But the Bible makes it very, very clear, probably Jesus Himself spoke more about the rewards of serving God than anybody else. There is a reward and the Bible encourages us, exhorts us, to remember the reward and not to lose it. In speaking to one of the churches, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus said, "Don't lose what you've got, hold onto it, don't let somebody else take your prize." So there is a sense in which it's legitimate and scriptural to strive for a prize. Paul spoke in Philippians about striving for a prize. He spoke about athletes who strive for a perishable crown, and then he spoke about striving for an imperishable crown.

And I want to take one example from the life of Paul, right at the end of his life when he was in prison, and in many senses he could have been regarded as a failure. He was elderly; he was a little infirm; one of his best friends had deserted him; the world would have written him off, and there he was awaiting execution. And this is what he says, 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8:

> "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

(NIV)

Those are beautiful words. They thrill me. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” I want to tell you this, if you are going to keep the faith, you’ve got to fight the good fight and you’ve got to finish the race. Christianity is a fight and Christianity is a race and you’ve got to be prepared to fight—not fight men but fight the unseen forces of evil and sin and worldliness. If you’re going to keep the faith you’ve got to fight the fight and finish the race. And then Paul says, “Now, I’m looking for the crown.”

It’s a beautiful contrast there. In the natural, in the human realm, he was awaiting trial and execution by a very evil, corrupt, unjust, human judge, Nero, the Emperor of Rome at that time. But he looked beyond that earthly court scene and that earthly trial and he knew that one day he was going to stand before another judge, a Divine judge, an absolutely just judge, and on that day, that absolutely just judge would give him the reward which was his due, the crown of righteousness. And he says, “Not only is this reward due me, but it’s due to all who’ve loved his appearing.” So let me end with these words, remember the prize-giving. There’s a day ahead. If you’ve been faithful, if you’ve fought the good fight, finished your course, then there’s a crown laid up for you, for everyone who meets the conditions. It’s not wrong to desire that crown. The Bible encourages us. Remember, don’t lose your crown, hold on.

Well, our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I’ll be sharing with you another important and helpful theme from the Word of God.

My special offer this week deals with one form of self-discipline which is a must if you really intend to follow the Biblical route to endurance. It’s my book: How to Fast Successfully. Practiced with faith and understanding, fasting is a key to levels of Christian living which cannot be achieved in other ways. My book will place this key in your hand.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on “Endurance” is available in a single, carefully-edited cassette.

Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

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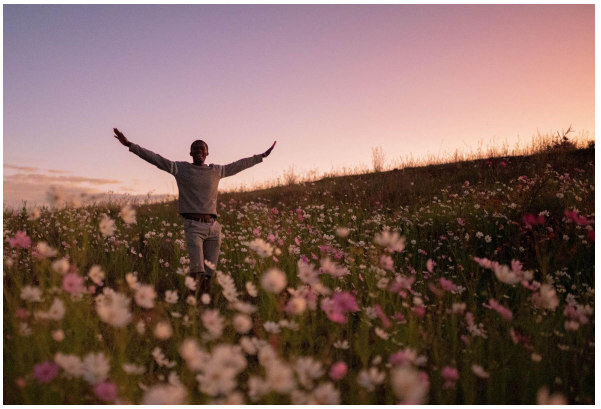

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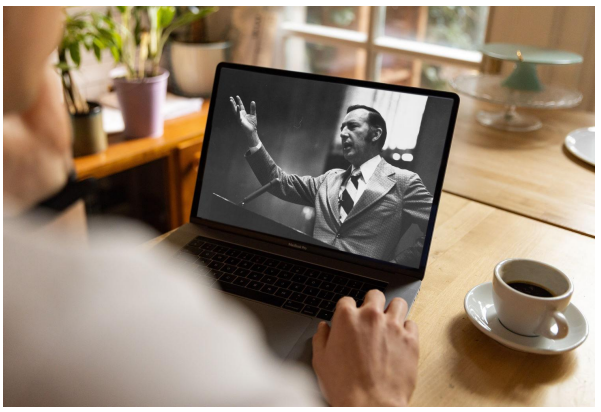

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