



CALLED TO ENDURE!

Pastor Dillon Barber // October 19, 2025

Text: 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 (ESV)

Big Idea: Believers are called to a ministry of endurance by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Good morning, Foothills Church and welcome back. My name is Dillon Barber if we haven't met yet. It's a beautiful morning to be together. As we get started, I want to say good morning to our friends joining us (Classic 9:30 and Online Community). As many of you heard, Pastor Brian underwent surgery this week on his right shoulder. Everything went great. He is home and recovering. Please continue to pray for him and Cindy as he undergoes physical therapy and all that fun stuff. If you would like to smother him with, get well cards, feel free to drop those off at the office this week and we will get those delivered to him. I'm hoping that he is not watching this online right now, because I might be in deep trouble. We love Brian and all that he does to lead this church and pray for a quick recovery. Next time you see him he will be wearing a sling and please don't punch him in the shoulder when you say hi.

This morning, we are going to be talking about endurance. Endurance is one of those things that you have to practice in order to get good at, and it's never fun to practice endurance. My son has always loved fun facts. He used to read the Guinness book of world records, just for fun and share the interesting and weird things that he learned. Well last week he told me about a guy who was trying to walk around the world and only had 2000 miles left to go. I was super skeptical. Like, how are you going to walk across the ocean, come on. And I kind of brushed it off as another internet hoax. My son didn't appreciate that very much. So this week I looked it up. His name is Karl Bushby, he's an Englishman, who has spent 27 years walking from the southern tip of Argentina, all the way up the America's, across the Bering Strait on ice into Russia, and across the continents of Asia and Europe. He had to take many breaks along the way because of visa troubles and financial challenges, but after 27 years he has only about 2000 miles to complete his trip back to England. Talk

about endurance. Seems a bit crazy to me, but I'm impressed with his determination.

This morning we continue our study of 2 Corinthians. Just for review let's look at verses 5:16-21. Does that all sound familiar? If you missed last week I encourage you to go and watch it online. We who are Christ followers, have been reconciled to God through the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross. The barrier of sin that separated us from God has now been removed and we are reconciled to Him. Not only that, God has made each one of us his representatives, his ambassadors for Christ, and given us the ministry of reconciliation. So when we leave church this morning, we go out to our homes, our communities, our jobs, we are representing Christ and doing our part to connect people to Jesus as help them grow to love and serve him.

Today we learn that the ministry of reconciliation is a ministry of endurance.

Let's take a look at 2 Cor. 6:3-4. Of all the things that Paul could have bragged about regarding his ministry he chose endurance. That's what commends him. Not the miracles, not the conversions and baptisms, not all the preaching and teaching and discipleship that he did. Not the church plants spanning across cities and nations. Nope, he didn't boast about any of that. Instead he said "we commend ourselves every day by great endurance."

Remember that Paul's reputation as an Apostle and leader is under attack by a group of people who have moved into Corinth and are stirring up trouble for him. One of the arguments against Paul was that he faced hardship and resistance just about everywhere he went. The lie that was being told in Corinth was that being a good Christian means your life will be easy and nothing bad will happen to you. Consequently, if bad things do happen, that means you aren't a very good Christian. See how that works? Sadly, people are still believe these kinds of things today.

Paul is countering this falsehood by saying that the only thing that commends his ministry is endurance. Not all the other amazing things that God worked through him, no, simply his commitment to continue on with the ministry of reconciliation no matter the cost. And it cost him a lot. This theme of endurance is carried throughout the New Testament.

Hebrews 12:1-2 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." The author uses the illustration of a race to explain our life with Jesus. This is more of an ultra marathon than a sprint. This is a life long endurance race.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 1: 9-11 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

Endurance is part of our walk with the Lord through life. But why do we need it? Why is it the highlight of Paul's ministry? Paul gives us nine reasons. Look at verses 3-5. (Read). Christians need endurance because life and ministry are hard. You don't need me to tell you this, you already know it. Many of you know this better than I do. Life is hard. These bodies of flesh that need constant care and will still fall apart as we age, this is hard. Caring for your family members, your spouses, your kids,

your aging parents, it's hard. Working your entire adult life is hard. Loving your friends, your neighbors, your enemies, day after day, year after year is hard. It's good but it's hard. Some of you have been praying for your spouse or your wayward kids for 20 or more years, hoping that Jesus will break through to their hearts, and you are still praying. It's hard. These are difficult things.

And Paul had it a lot harder than most of us do. Look at his list of hardships. He says them in groups of three. Affliction, hardship and calamity. These three words basically mean the same thing in different degrees and all could be translated trouble. These are the bad things that happen in life and they happen to all of us. Whether it's natural disaster, health issues, family hardship, economic struggle, we are all going to face hard things that we have to endure.

Next Paul lists beatings, imprisonments and riots. Paul experienced these multiple times in his ministry. I've never been beaten or imprisoned for my faith but there are plenty of people in the world who have been and worse. In places like China, Africa, the middle east, even Great Britain, Christians are under intense persecution today. Many of them have lost their lives. The Persecution.org website claims that some 380 million Christians world wide are facing high levels of persecution and discrimination. (For context, that's greater than the entire population of the U.S.). Even in the US in the past few months we have seen an increase in violence against Christians.

Finally, Paul gives three more "life is hard" statements. Labors, sleepless nights, and hunger were part of his ministry. He was a tent maker on the side, in order to support himself. He spent a lot of nights out in the cold as he traveled from town to town and city to city planting churches and preaching the gospel. I'm sure there were some rough nights for Paul and his friends that made them want to give up and go home. The ministry of reconciliation is hard and costly and sometimes we want to give up and walk away. But thankfully God gives us tools to help us endure all the hard things that we face in life and ministry.

[Transition]

God equips us for the ministry of endurance by the power of the Holy Spirit. We endure by practicing a Spirit filled life. Take a look at Verses 6-7 (Lets Read). Paul gave us a list of nine troubles or hardships, this time he gives a list of nine graces or helps. The first of these reflect the spiritual gifts listed in Galatians 5. Love, joy, peace, patience kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. We endure hard things in life by bearing spiritual fruit, by living out fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Next Paul says we endure by the Holy Spirit and the power of God. These are the same thing. The Holy Spirit is at work in all believers. This is the power of God at work in us. Without the Spirit, we are hopeless in the face of hardship, calamity, persecution and loss. It is the Spirit that enables us and empowers us to get through our toughest days.

Sandwiched between the Holy Spirit and the Power of God, Paul shares two incredible tools that give us endurance. Genuine love and the word of truth. Genuine, unhypocritical love (literally translated) is one of the best ways to boost our endurance. To genuinely love one another without hypocrisy is such a gift. To actually care for each other, to assume the best in each other, to say what we mean and mean what we say. If I'm walking through a life challenge, a hard season or loss and I know that my brothers and sisters in Christ are with me and praying for me and encouraging me and loving me the best they know how, I can endure so much more. What a gift, that we can love one another through our hard seasons.

The other tool is the "word of truth." The ESV translates it truthful speech. I don't really like that translation. Paul uses this same phrase in Ephesians 1:13 and Colossians 1:5 and it's translated "word of truth" in reference to the gospel. The word of truth, the gospel, the good news of God's word, anchors our endurance in the promises of God. I can endure all kinds of heart ache in life because I know through God's word that God is gentle and compassionate towards the broken hearted. I can endure all kinds of

calamity because I know through God's word that God cares about the needs of people just like you and me. I can endure sickness and disease because God's word says I am fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image, he knows how many or how few hairs are on my head and he knows everything that my body needs. I won't live one day longer or one day less than he intends for me to live so I can trust him with today. And hopefully, if it comes to, I can endure all kinds of persecution because God's word says that Jesus was persecuted on our behalf, and he will be with us through every kind of persecution we may face. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of have in your life right now, I encourage you to immerse yourself in God's word. There you will find a God who is faithful and good and always keeps his promises.

So, we are called to endure because life is really hard at times, and the ministry of reconciliation is difficult. And we endure through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and the truth of scripture and the love of the fellowship, so we don't have to endure all alone, but where is the fruit of endurance? What comes from all of this suffering and enduring?

In the last few verses, Paul explains that the result of endurance is a new perspective. Maybe I can say it this way. The result of endurance is a new mindset or a Kingdom mindset. This shift in perspective is illustrated by nine antithesis. An antithesis is a direct opposite or the rhetorical contrast of ideas. Let's read these nine antitheses in verses 8-10. (Let's read).

As I read through this list I kept thinking about the Kingdom of heaven that Jesus talked about through the Gospels. It's an upside-down kingdom. It's different than the world because God sees things differently than the world sees them. In God's kingdom, the first will be last and the last will be first. In God's kingdom to be the master, you must first be the servant of all. In God's kingdom the poor and the humble and the grieving are the ones who are blessed. But none of those things make sense until you have lived through some really hard seasons of life and you experienced how God can take those hard things and turn them into fruitful seasons that help us grow closer to Jesus.

In God's kingdom he can take what the world sees as dishonorable and make it honorable. When someone slanders you because of your faith in Jesus, God sees it as praise. The world may treat us as imposters, but the Spirit affirms that we are his, and we are true to God's word and his values. You may be the only believer in your work place or your family and feel totally isolated and alone at times. God sees you, and God knows you are his.

Paul endured all kinds of beatings and floggings, he was even stoned and left for dead and eventually he did die for his faith. I'm grateful that we here in the U.S. are not often punished or very often killed for our faith but that could change. But even if we face death itself, we know that just beyond death is eternal life with Jesus.

These last three antitheses really highlight the shift in perspective that comes with Endurance. "Though sorrowful yet rejoicing." How can this be? Only a spirit filled person can experience the joy of the Lord while suffering grief and sorrow. "As poor yet making many rich." How do we do this? When we come to realize that the things money can buy are empty in comparison to the richness of God's grace towards us, we understand what it means to make others rich. Finally Paul says "having nothing, yet possessing everything." What God gives us is so much greater, so much better so much more fulfilling than anything the world has to offer. When we stop thirsting for all the things that the world values and we drink from the stream of living water that God gives to us, we will realize that we have everything we could ever need in Christ Jesus himself. This is the fruit of endurance.

James 1:12 "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

I have been to my share of funerals and memorials over the years. I've heard a lot of stories about people after they have died. Stories about what people achieved in life, the families they loved, the things they

loved to do, their giftings, you know all the stories that we share about people at memorials. No matter how incredible or mundane a person's life may be, my favorite stories are always the same. When someone stands up and says, "She loved the lord all the way until the end." Or "He was faithful to his last breath." Those are always my favorite.

Life is hard friends; It's a scary world out there right now. The economy is scary, the wars that are going on in the world. The social challenges our nation is facing are scary. And I know that many of you are going through it right now. Tough things, medical issues, family issues, grief, it's for real. Life is hard, ministry is hard, and we have a lot to endure.

I want to encourage you that God knows this struggle, and he is on our side. If we endure, if we hold on to Jesus through these hard things, God can use them to reveal himself to us in new and powerful ways. He can use them to grow us and mature us and give us a new perspective, new ways of seeing the world the way he sees things. And a new ability to value what God values instead of what the world values.

So, Keep leaning into the Holy Spirit and depending on him for strength. Keep studying God's word and the promises of his faithfulness and keep loving one another with an authentic, unhypocritical love. We are in this together, Amen?

I like to leave us with some questions to wrestle with as we head into the week.

1. What lesson is God teaching you through this current struggle or hardship? How is God revealing himself in the middle of your struggle?
2. Who are you praying for and reaching as a minister of reconciliation? Are you approaching this with a heart of endurance or one of impatience?
3. How is God shifting your perspective on what the world values verses what He values? Do you need to look at your current circumstances with new eye or a new perspective?

4. Who in your circle needs some encouragement and love right now?
How can you come alongside them this week and lift them up in their struggle?

Think about these things as you go. Let's pray.