

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

A. Biblical definition of faith

1. As believers and pursuers of Christ, we must look to the Scriptures to get our knowledge and understanding for how we are expected to live.
2. Scripture gives a very clear depiction of what a life looks like for someone in relationship with God (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, the prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus’ disciples, etc.), and we are called to view these people’s lives as examples and models for how we interact with God as well as walk out life.
3. We tend to use Scripture more as a guide for what we are supposed to know at an informational level in regards to our faith (such as biblical principles and mere head knowledge) instead of what we should experience in our walk with God (experiential knowledge). The Bible gives examples of both, but it emphasizes experiential knowledge.¹
4. Ruthven gives the following summary of what Scripture emphasizes in regards to faith: “The mandate, then, is to hear God’s immediate voice, which usually commands the hearer to live out an experience of God’s might working against opposition and testing. Scripture describes this process as faith.”²
 - a) Faith is a test of whether or not we trust in what God has spoken and are able/willing to walk it out in

¹ Jon Mark Ruthven, *What’s Wrong With Protestant Theology: Tradition Vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 1.

² Ruthven, 2.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

dependence on Him to fulfill it even in the face of adversity, testing, doubts.

b) This experience of faith is a central and recurring theme throughout the biblical narrative.

5. Faith = hearing from God followed by enduring obedience in the midst of resistance

B. The ultimate temptation for humanity of doubting God’s voice

1. The central temptation for humanity is “whether or not we hear God or heed our own human wisdom.”³ This is what is emphasized in Scripture in regards to humanity’s biggest struggle and temptation.

a) See the temptations of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, as well as Jesus.

C. Trusting and persevering in the process

1. There is a process where God speaks and we endure until fruit is produced. This is the biblical depiction of faith. This endurance often comes in the face of adversity, but adversity purifies and strengthens our roots in Him; - it purifies our faith and produces beautiful fruit (1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:1-4). However, we must trust and persevere in the process.

2. Patience - Patience is a huge part of this process. We can see from the biblical narrative and examples above, that God’s word does not always happen overnight. In fact, it typically takes years to fully develop and form in someone’s life. By faith we endure and persevere, because we trust Him to be faithful (cf. Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 12:2; 2 Peter 3:9). The last thing we want is to abort the process and word

³ Ruthven, 129.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

that God has spoken to us. We must press on to endure and see the fruit of God’s fulfilled word in our life.

3. “Fruitfulness in our life comes about through a similar process. God plants the seed of His word inside you (see Luke 8:11) and waters it with His Holy Spirit, bringing it to life. He begins to give you insight into who He created you to be *in* Him and what He is calling you to do *with* Him. He stirs up that desire in you to have a lasting impact in the world. And then He starts to build a *root system* for that seed in your heart, your internal world.”⁴ (Banning Liebscher)

D. Faith pleases God

1. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” This means that faith is what pleases God and without faith, we cannot please Him. When we walk in faithfulness, He is pleased with us.
2. We see this in the life of Jesus. He was amazed by displays of great faith.
 - a) Matthew 8:10 - “When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”
 - b) Matthew 15:28 - “Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.”

E. Biblical Faith

1. The Bible is very clear on its description of faith as being experiential. It is also very clear on the importance of

⁴Banning Liebscher, *Rooted*, 3-4.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

individual hearing directly from God and walking in obedience in order to initiate the journey of faith. This journey will contain struggles, resistance, and trails, but if we endure patiently, we will see the faithfulness of God! A life of faith pleases Him.

II. Endurance is one of the most important yet least talked about traits of the Christian faith. We do not often talk about the importance of enduring and persevering, yet many of the principles that we have discussed throughout this class demand endurance in order to produce lasting fruit. This section will discuss some of the most important yet overlooked or ignored biblical principles of our walk with Christ.

A. Endurance

1. While discussing the coming persecution, wars, trials, sufferings, etc. for His disciples and believers, Jesus finishes by encouraging and exhorting His disciples to endure. He simply states, “By your endurance you will gain your lives” (Luke 21:19).
 - a) Endurance means that we finish well the race that we have started in Christ. It means we stay connected to Him and walk with Him even in difficult times.
 - b) Many Christians have the false, unbiblical notion that becoming a follower of Christ will protect us from suffering, persecution, and trials; however, Paul tells us in his letter to timothy that, “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). To truly follow Christ in a godly way leads to persecution.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

- c) Instead of fleeing from these things, we must learn to endure through them. Endurance produces character, hope and maturity in us (cf. Romans 15:5).
 - (1) “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).
- 2. Calls to endurance in the New Testament (read each one)
 - a) 2 Corinthians 6:4
 - b) Colossians 1:11
 - c) Hebrews 10:36
 - d) Hebrews 12:1
 - e) Revelation 1:9; 2:2; 2:19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12
- 3. If we do not endure, we may very well forfeit the prize that we are running towards (cf. 1 Corinthians 9-10).
 - a) Heidi Baker has an entire teaching called, “if you don’t quit you win.” As a missionary that has given years of her life in struggles, persecution, trials, etc. She has endured the temptations to quit what God had promised her numerous times; however, she endured those times of doubt and has produced amazing and lasting fruit. The heart of her message is that if we don’t quit on God and what He has spoken to us, we will win. We must learn to endure the hard times by looking to Him for our strength.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

b) Teddy Roosevelt is credited with the following quote, “Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty... I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well.”

4. Patience in our endurance and sufferings

a) The Christian life is not a race to see who can obtain the highest level the quickest. Instead, it is a life-long journey and process to become who God has called us to become. Sometimes, there are exciting moments of fruitfulness and expansion, and other moments are filled with trials and struggles.

(1) Most of the testimonies we hear from others (ministers, missionaries, etc.) come from their highlight reel with the Lord. We do not always see the price that they had to pay in order to obtain those victories. Many have paid extremely high prices in their personal lives to see God move in a greater way.

B. Suffering

1. Suffering is another trait/principle that is important to our Christian walk. It is also another one that we do not like to mention very often. While it is wrong to have an unhealthy desire to suffer (we are not masochistic Christians), it is equally wrong to deny its importance or avoid it.

2. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Enduring Faith–God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

- a) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.
3. Verses on suffering in the New Testament (read several)
 - a) Romans 5:3
 - b) Romans 8:18
 - c) Ephesians 3:13
 - d) Philippians 3:10
 - e) Colossians 1:24
 - f) 2 Thessalonians 1:5
 - g) 2 Timothy 1:8
 - h) 2 Timothy 2:3
 - i) 2 Timothy 3:11
 - j) 2 Timothy 4:5
 - k) Hebrews 2:10
 - l) Hebrews 10:32
 - m) James 5:7-10
 - n) 1 Peter 2:19
 - o) 1 Peter 4:13
4. Suffering for Christ is one of the core values of Iris Ministries. Rolland Baker spoke the following statements about suffering to their ministry’s leadership:

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

a) We are willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. Suffering for the Gospel doesn’t mean being unhappy. It actually can make you very, very happy because you’re willing to show love to people out of love for God [see Acts 5:41]! You’re willing to prove your love and by proving your love you will get a response from God. To the degree that we share in the sufferings of Christ, to the degree we are willing to show the world a love it has never seen before, we share in His reward and joy. We don’t just pray for protection against anybody hurting us, or doing anything that bothers us. We learn the joy of loving no matter what anybody does to us or how they treat us. It’s a joy to prove our love for God in this way! We’re not stupid; we don’t look for suffering. We don’t try to suffer, but we’re willing to suffer according to the will of God. The Bible tells us that He rewards those who suffer according to His will.⁵

5. Suffering and Joy

- a) As Rolland stated above, suffering for Christ can actually bring joy. That is what we see in Acts 5:41 after the disciples were put on trial and beat for preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.
- b) James 1:2-4 reads, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

6. Suffering and perfection

- a) Furthermore, we see in James that suffering produces steadfastness or perseverance (see NIV). This perseverance, when it has its full effect - in other words, time - will produce a perfection or wholeness in us.

⁵ Baker, *Keep the Fire*, 94.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

- b) Essentially, when we suffer and are able to endure and rejoice in it, we are becoming even more dependent on the Lord through our trust in Him regardless of our circumstances. This produces a wholeness in us where we are no longer dependent on worldly, external things, but we are fully strengthened, nourished, and comforted by Christ.
- c) Our greatest example of how suffering can lead to perfection is Christ Jesus. Hebrews 2:10 tells us the following: “For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

(1) If Jesus allowed suffering to bring forth perfection, how much more should we?

7. The promise of the Comforter (Helper)

- a) In John 14: 16, Jesus Himself promises that the Father will send us a helper (the Holy Spirit)- the King James Version refers to the Holy Spirit as the “Comforter.” In other words, the Holy Spirit is there for the purpose of helping and comforting as we walk out our faith in Christ Jesus. We would not need a helper/comforter if God was not calling us into difficult situations or circumstances where we would need help or comfort. The beautiful thing is that we have a promise from God for help and comfort in our times of need (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

C. Suffering and Faith

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

1. 1 Peter 1:6-7 “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

a) Through our suffering our faith is tested and refined. It is proven to be true, and as such, it glorifies and honors Christ.

b) When Christ returns, our purified faith which endured all our sufferings and trials, will serve as a trophy of our love and commitment to Christ and glorify Him before all.

c) Through our suffering we have the opportunity to obtain trophy’s of Christ’s glory! We are able to display to the entire creative world how much we loved our Lord.

(1) The writer of Revelation gives us a beautiful picture of the believers that gave everything for Christ, including their lives: “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (12:11).

(a) In other words, these believers died to themselves (quite literally) for their love of Christ.

D. Dying to ourselves

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

1. The answer to enduring through the face of suffering and persecution is dying to ourselves. Again, Rolland Baker states the following when it comes to this principle:
 - a) We are often asked what the overcoming key to our ministry and growth is. We don’t think in terms of keys or secrets, but of the simplest truths of the Gospel. We have learned by experience that there is no way forward when pressed to our extremities but to sacrifice ourselves at every turn for His sake, knowing nothing but Jesus and Him crucified. We must die to live. It is better to give than to receive, and better to love than to be loved. We cannot lose because we have a perfect savior who is able to finish what He began in us, if we do not give up and throw away our faith.⁶
2. Jesus calls us to lay down our lives for Him and the purpose of His kingdom.
 - a) “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:34-35).
3. Paul had this same mindset in His service to Christ
 - a) “For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers,^[a] of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

⁶ Baker, *Keeping the Fire*, 95-96.

Enduring Faith—God’s Process of Building His Sons & Daughters

4. The only way to truly see a life of power is to surrender it fully to Jesus Christ. By giving our entire life to Him, enduring even through suffering and trials, we will see His power manifest in our very lives.

a) “The true disciple lives a life of both perseverance and power. It is not either suffering or glory. It is both.”⁷

E. Conclusion

1. The Christian life is one that involves enduring even through suffering and persecution. However, our endurance and suffering is not without reason. We are promised joy and victory in Christ if we do not quit, but endure in our faith. He meets us in our sufferings and sorrows. He comforts us in our trials and struggles. He empowers us in our weakness and inability. He fills us when we empty ourselves of our own lives to live for Him. He glorifies Himself and perfects us through the testing of our faith. Let us not hold back anything, not even our very lives in service to Him, because He is worthy.

⁷ Baker, *Keeping the Fire*, 98,