**NPS Bible Study Lesson 5**

**MARKS OF MATURITY:**

**BIBLICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN LEADER**

**Mark #12: Endurance or Perseverance and Patience**

1. Introduction

As the Psalmist declares, the world in which we live beautifully reflects the glory of God (Ps. 19:1-6); indeed, it is not only a mighty revelation of His divine power (Rom. 1:20), but of the daily grace and mercy of God’s beneficial providence (Acts 14:17; Job 5:9-10; Ps. 65;). Life is filled with a variety of wonderful varied blessings that God has given us to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). But it is also true, if we realistic look at the other side of the coin, life is also much like a jungle; it is a sinful and fallen world that operates under the dominating, sinister, and deceptive policies of one whom the Bible describes as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and “the God of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). Because of Satan’s deceitful activities and because of the devastating effects of the fall of man as recorded in Genesis 3, which includes a creation that groans under the curse enacted because of the fall (Rom. 8:19-22), we live in a cruel world that is often extremely hostile. The history of mankind and the daily news is a marked testimony to that fact.

In this world, man lives in rebellion against God and with a great deal of hostility against his fellow man, especially for those who stand in allegiance to the Lord Jesus (cf. John 15:18-23). Truly, it’s a jungle out there! The daily headlines bear testimony to this reality. We hear of disasters and catastrophes. There are killer earthquakes, deadly hurricanes and tornadoes, and floods in some parts of the world while long-term droughts destroy other areas. In addition, we have witnessed moral degeneracy and breakdown on every level in our society. In this country alone—once a truly Christian nation led by men of great faith and courage—we have seen tremendous moral breakdown as evidenced by so many heart-breaking events. Most recently, we have witnessed a rash of school shootings with children killing teachers and students. In addition, we have witnessed church bombings, parental and spouse abuse, and even parents murdering their own children. Our streets are full of crime—drugs, murder, theft, rape, fraud, and on and on the list goes.

Equally disturbing is the gross indecency we have witnessed in our nation’s capital at the highest level of leadership, but even more troublesome is the fact this behavior by the President didn’t seem to bother very many Americans. It seems they were more concerned about financial prosperity or maintaining their comfortable lifestyle and didn’t want to rock the boat. But this short overview of what we are facing in our fallen world does not even touch on the many problems we are each susceptible to like diseases that strike and destroy lives and families. Finally, in addition to all of the above, there has been a growing attack on the Christian community and often by our own government through the courts. Christian bashing and intimidation is regular fare by a very liberal media and the Hollywood crowd, a group that has become more and more degenerate with each passing year.

Because of such conditions, which are on the rise (2 Tim. 3:12-13), the Christian life is sometimes characterized in the Bible as a race to be run (1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1; 2 Tim. 4:7) and a struggle or an athletic contest to be fought (1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:9; 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:32). Other prominent terms used of the Christian’s life in the world are labor or toil or work (1 Cor. 3:8; 15:58; 2 Cor. 11:27; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8) and testing or trials (Jam 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6; 4:12). Obviously, no one can continue to run in the race, stand firm in the struggles of life, labor effectively, or handle the trials of life without endurance or perseverance, and patience.

As mentioned throughout this series, the goal of spiritual maturity is Christ-likeness, attaining the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13) or being transformed into His image from glory to glory (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18). Thus, in contrast to the ever fading glory on the face of Moses, Paul could write:

And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

As with all the marks of spiritual maturity, the Lord Jesus is our perfect example in the mature qualities of endurance or perseverance, and patience. Thus, to encourage his readers to endure the trials of life, the author of Hebrews first pointed to the heroes of faith described in chapter 11 as a great cloud of witnesses who endured trials by faith in the promises and purposes of God. By the history of their lives, these Old Testament saints bear a constant testimony to us (Heb. 12:1). However, standing as the pinnacle or the supreme illustration of one who endured the cross and the many hostilities of sinners, he pointed his readers to the Lord Jesus. He stands as the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith or literally and simply “the faith.” He is the ultimate illustration of living the faith way of life. What is it that Christ did? He endured. Thus, in this great and moving passage, the author points us to the Cross and the many hostilities the Savior endured as the catalyst and the example that should fortify Christians to endurance as they face the difficulties involved in living out their faith in a hostile and difficult world.

Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, 12:2 keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. 12:3 Think of him who endured such opposition against himself by sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and give up.

I have read that the following words were spelled out in lights at the 18th Olympics at Tokyo, in 1964.

“The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part; just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is … to have fought well.”

I am reminded of some of Paul’s last words to encourage Timothy to persevere or endure:

2 Timothy 4:5- 7 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing. (emphasis mine)

1. The Meaning of Endurance or Perseverance and Patience

THE BASIC IDEA AND MEANING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The American Heritage dictionary defines perseverance as “steady persistence in adhering to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose; steadfastness.” It defines endurance as “the act, quality, or power of withstanding hardship or stress,” but in the second definition it defines endurance as “the state or act of persevering.”92 While they are synonyms and each word carries in it the idea of “continuance,” perseverance lays stress on a given course of action in the face of difficulty or opposition. Endurance perhaps more strongly adds the idea of continuing under resistance or the adversities of life, to carry on in spite of hardships as “endure an Arctic winter.” Patience refers to the quality of enduring pain, hardship, provocation, or annoyance with calmness. In addition, patience can include the calm willingness to tolerate delay. In the New Testament, however, the Greek word usually translated patience is more often associated with patience with people and the endurance or perseverance with conditions, circumstances, and purposes. With this in mind, let’s now turn to an overview of the key Greek words and some of the New Testament passages involved with this quality of Christ-likeness.

THE MEANING OF THE GREEK WORDS FOR ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As with the English terms, all the words dealt with under this heading refer to man’s endurance or perseverance and patience when faced with the various difficulties of life, whether one’s behavior is that of passive resistance or active and courageous resistance with patience.

1. HUPOMONE (THE NOUN) AND HUPOMENO (THE VERB.

Most translations translate these words either by “endurance” or “perseverance,” depending on the context. Often, when continuance on a course is in view like bearing fruit or doing good works, “perseverance” is used. On the other hand, when continuance against difficult conditions are in view, “endurance” is used but this varies with the different translations. These words are a derivative of two words which means, “under” and another which means “to remain, abide.” Fundamentally, they connote the idea of remaining under pressure in the sense of endure, hold up under. Given the issues discussed earlier, the fallen condition of our world and its hostility to those who want to live godly and follow the Lord, these words are naturally used with relative frequency in the New Testament. The noun hupomone is used 32 times and the verb hopomeno 17 times. Because of these many uses, the time and the nature of this study will only allow a focus on some of the key uses.

2. KARTEREO

Kartereo is found only once in the New Testament, Hebrews 11:27, but the meaning of this word and its use here is significant to a study on endurance. Kartereo (from kratos, “strength”) means “to be strong, to be steadfast, to endure.” Speaking of Moses, the author of Hebrews wrote, “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.” Hebrews 11:27 shows that the reason for Moses’ fearlessness and endurance was that in faith he kept the one who is invisible continually before his eyes. As in Hebrews 12:1, a vital element that strengthens the heart for endurance is keeping ones eyes on the Lord or staying focused on Him as the victorious Savior. While He is physically invisible to us, He is nevertheless revealed to us in the written Word. It is there, in the Word, that we can keep our eyes on the Savior.

3. MAKROTHUMEO AND MAKROTHUMIA

Makrothumeo (the verb, used 10 times in the New Testament) and makrothumia (the noun, used 14 times) are derived from a compound of ( makros) “long” and ( thumos), “temper, passion” thus, “long-tempered.” In secular Greek the meaning was perseverance rather than patience, but in the New Testament, these words took on a new flavor and significance. In biblical Greek they “denote particularly a divine forbearance which the recipients should themselves emulate in facing their problems. The Letter of Aristeas may have the new meaning. ‘By showing clemency ( makrothumia),’ said the envoy to the king, ‘you will turn your people from evil’ (p. 188).93

In the New Testament the verb is used actively meaning “to persevere, endure” (Heb. 6:15) or passively, “be patient, long-suffering” (Jam. 5:7-8). Thus, these words may describe either perseverance under trials (see Heb. 6:12 for this use with the noun) or the attitude of self-restraint that refuses to get even for a wrong that has been done but patiently endures rather than retaliate. Thus, these words characteristically represent long-suffering patience toward persons rather than things.94

4. ANECHO

Anecho, “to endure, bear with, put up with,” is found only in the middle voice in the New Testament, i.e., anechomai. As such, it means “to bear with either someone (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:3) or something as a difficult pressure or affliction (2 Thess. 1:4).

5. ANEXIKAKOS,

This word, which occurs only in 2 Timothy 2:24, means “to bear evil without resentment, to be patient.” It is derived from the future form ( anexomai) of the verb just described, anecho, “to endure” plus the noun kakos, “evil.” Thus, it means “to patiently endure evil.” This noun “…implied in the LXX the quality of patiently affirming a belief in face of mockery” (Wis 2:19).

1. Important Lessons on Endurance and Patience from the New Testament

ENDURANCE OF CHRIST (2 THESS. 3:5)

We have an interesting statement in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 regarding endurance as a Christ-like quality that God wants to develop in our lives as a part of our spiritual growth. “Now may the Lord direct your hearts toward the love of God and the endurance of Christ.” There are three possible ways to take this passage grammatically and actually all three may apply, but it is the third one that is probably best and important to our study.

In this prayer, Paul prayed that either (1) they might wait patiently for the coming Savior as translated by the KJV, “into the patient waiting for Christ” (objective genitive), or (2) that they might have the kind of endurance that Christ gives, an endurance that comes from relationship with Him (subjective genitive), or (3) that they might experience the kind of endurance that belongs to Christ or that was demonstrated in His sufferings on earth and that He is demonstrating even now as He waits for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet (Heb. 12:2; 10:13, either a possessive or attributive genitive). All three are true biblically and perhaps all are intended. This would then be what is sometimes called a plenary construction where the author intends more than one idea to be understood. Number three, however, was probably Paul’s intention. While a too rigid exegesis is to be avoided, it may, perhaps, be permissible to paraphrase: “the Lord teach and enable you to love as God loves, and to be patient as Christ is patient.”95 Thus again, maturity in Christ-likeness is the objective.

Similarly, Luke 8:11 and James 1:2-4 relate endurance to the issue of spiritual growth and maturity. In Luke 8:11 Jesus said, “But as for the seed that landed on the good soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with steadfast endurance ( hupomone). Because of the hostile pressures mentioned in the previous soils (vss. 12-14), bearing fruit takes time and requires growth which here describes a steadfast endurance, just as it does for the farmer.

The relationship of suffering, endurance, and hope in the growth and maturity of Christians is also seen in Romans 5:3-4: “Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance; and endurance, character; and character, hope.”

ENDURANCE OF TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Naturally, our words for “endurance,” hupomone and hupomeno, are often used in connection with trials or tribulation, but never in the sense of mere resignation or a ‘grin and bear it’ attitude. Other biblical qualities or purposes are always associated with their use somewhere in the context. (a) They are often used in connection with God’s use of trials as tools for our growth and maturity. “Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance ( hupomone); and endurance ( hupomone), character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4). “My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything” (Jam. 1:2-4 see also Heb. 12:7). (b) Hupomone or endurance under affliction is also a means of establishing the reality of Christ in a Christian’s life or of attesting to the character of one’s walk with the Savior (cf. 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Cor. 6:4; Jam. 1:12).

ENDURANCE OF HOPE

Our words for endurance, hupomone and hupomeno, are often used in connection with hope. In the New Testament, hope may look at the activity, hoping, or at the object or content of one’s hope, the things hoped for. It is the Christian’s hope, his confident expectation in what God is doing as a sovereign God and will do, that is one of the means to his endurance under affliction or trial. As will be stressed later, endurance is related to heavenly treasures, rewards, and the eternal future, especially to the return of the Lord and the glories that will follow. In 1 Thessalonians, which has such a strong emphasis on the return of the Lord (it is referred to in every chapter), Paul praises the Thessalonians for their “endurance of hope.” As translated by the NIV, this means “their endurance inspired by hope,” their hope in the return of the Savior (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3 with verse 10). In keeping with this focus on the return of Christ and the blessings it will bring, James reminds us that those who endure trials will receive the crown of life (Jam. 1:12).

ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE OF JOY

Endurance ( hupomone and hupomeno) and patience ( makrothumia and makrothumeo) are both used in connection with joy because the believer’s endurance under trials or patience with others should never be a matter of a grim resignation to a situation or a person who might try our patience. You know, the ‘grin and bear it’ routine where underneath the grin is a sigh of impatience. Rather, because both are to be motivated by hope in the Person, purposes, promises, and principles of God as found in His Word, biblical endurance and patience is to be encapsulated with joy (see Rom. 5:2-5; 12:12; Col. 1:11-12; Heb. 12:2).

Romans 5:2-4 …through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God’s glory. 5:3 Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance; 5:4 and endurance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 12:12 Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, persist in prayer.

Steadfast hope, the confident expectation of what God is and will do, gives the capacity to endure with joy. Again, the Lord Jesus is our example and the perfect illustration of one whose endurance was connected with joy and the purposes and promises of God.

Hebrews 12:1b-2a …and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross,… (NASB)

As a fruit of being filled with the knowledge of God in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, Paul also links endurance and patience to a joyful spirit of thanksgiving.

Colossians 1:11-12 …bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness (endurance), with joy giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints’ inheritance in the light.

While it is debatable whether “with joy” should be connected with “steadfastness (endurance) and patience” (KJV, ASV, RSV, NEB) or with “giving thanks” (NIV, NET, NASB), the element of joy as a quality important to endurance and patience is evident in this passage. If the first construction, “steadfastness with joy,” is correct, joy is seen as the necessary element that is needed with endurance and patience. If “with thanksgiving” is correct, the passage is stressing that endurance and patience should be accompanied by “joyfully,” not begrudgingly, giving thanks to the Father. Paul quickly goes on to describe the kind of things for which we should be thankful. “Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:12-14). Our ability to endure and be patient is directly related to responding to our new life in Christ rather than on the transitory trials of life.

Colossians 1:11 is part of Paul’s prayer in verses 9-14 where he prays for the fruitful growth of the Colossians. He prays first that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will. The goal of such knowledge is for a worthy walk, one that is consistent with who the believer is in Christ (verses 9-10). This is then followed in verses 11-14 with what should be the results, the fruit of such knowledge in all spiritual wisdom and understanding: (1) bearing fruit in every good work, (2) growing continually in the knowledge of God, (3) being strengthened with all power…for the display of all patience and endurance, and (4) with joy giving thanks to the Father…. Two important principles might be noted here. First, patience and endurance are the result of growth, of maturing in God’s truth as a believer learns who he is in Christ, complete and blessed with every spiritual blessing (Col. 2:10; Eph. 1:3), why he is here as an ambassador of Christ, and where he is going as one who is only a sojourner on his way to eternal glories and rewards. Second, patience or longsuffering and endurance always require the habitual influx of God’s strength because nothing less than God’s supernatural strength is needed to transform impatient sinners into persevering and patient saints. Finally, as already stressed, patience and endurance need that marvelous, life-changing attitude of joy or it becomes mere resignation. “The endurance and longsuffering of some saints is a kind of sour resignation to God’s will, their patience sticking out all over them. In reality, exultation, not resignation, is the fitting companion of these virtues (cf. Phil 1:29).”96

1. ENDURANCE AND THE IMAGES OF EXPENDED EFFORT (Part 1)

As we study the New Testament, we also find that our words for endurance (hupomone and hupomeno) are used in connection with the images of the Christian life as a race to be run, as an object to pursue, and a battle to be fought (see Heb. 12:1; 1 Tim. 6:11-12). Without endurance by staying focused on the Lord Jesus, we could never run the race God has laid out for us here on this earth. Therefore, endurance is a quality that needs to be pursued with great endeavor.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that. Instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith (fight the good fight) and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession for in the presence of many witnesses.

ENDURANCE AND THE PATIENCE OF LOVE

Significantly, both of our main word groups for endurance ( hupomone and hupomeno) and patience ( makrothumia and makrothumeo) are used in connection with Christian love (1 Cor. 13:4, 7; 2 Tim. 2:10). Love remains steadfast or endures in the face of unpleasant circumstances and difficult people. Love is patient (1 Cor. 13:4) and endures all things (1 Cor. 13:7). Love ( agape), which is the product of the filling of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), gives the capacity to remain steadfast for the sake of others. Thus, Paul could say, “So I endure all things for the sake of those chosen by God, that they too may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus and its eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). First Corinthians 13—the great chapter on Christian agape or love—gives us a description of the nature of love in verses 4-7 with its Christ-like qualities. These qualities, though certainly the product of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23),97 also give us a description of Christ Himself. For the church at Corinth, which was so full of division and party strife, these qualities of verses 4-7 provided a solution to their many problems as well as in the church today. Interestingly, the very first quality stated is “love is patient” ( makrothumei, a gnomic present tense of a general and timeless truth). In other words, love never retaliates or seeks to get even. Where that occurs, love will be absent. Love keeps the lid on over the long haul.

ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE AS DISTINGUISHING QUALITIES OF CHARACTER

In 2 Corinthians 6:4-6, both endurance ( hupomone) and patience ( makrothumia) are listed among many qualities that demonstrated or clearly established Paul and his associates as mature “servants of God,” as those completely devoted to the Lord and His service and calling. “Patience” and “endurance” are qualities that mark a believer out as a mature and devoted servant of Christ.

ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE, A WORTHY WALK, AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

In Christ, all the basic human distinctions that consistently hinder loving relationships and unity are removed in spite of the many differences that exist, differences that so often cause impatience. This is one of the themes in both Ephesians (see Eph. 2:11-22) and Colossians. Speaking of our new relationship with one another in Christ, Paul wrote:

Colossians 3:11 Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.

Norman L. Geisler has an excellent summary on this issue in the New Testament edition of The Bible Knowledge Commentary

In Christ distinctions are removed. These include national distinctions (Greek or Jew; Jews called all those outside their nation Greeks; cf. Gal. 3:28); religious distinctions (circumcised or uncircumcised); cultural distinctions (anyone foreign to Greek culture was a barbarian, and a Scythian was a wild, savage nomad); and economic or social distinctions (slave or free). If a Greek, an uncircumcised person, a barbarian, a Scythian, or a slave became a believer, he was a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17), a “new self” (Col. 3:10), just like a Jew or free person who became a Christian. For Christ is all, and is in all. That is, normal human distinctions are overruled and transfigured by one’s union in Christ.

All barriers are destroyed in Christ, and all believers are truly “created equal.” So it is to be expected that each believer—regardless of his nationality, former religion, culture, or economic standing—should do away with his former sinful practices and should live in accord with his “new self.”98

This new life in Christ requires a very different lifestyle, one that is consistent with who the Christian is in Christ. It’s a lifestyle that dramatically changes our attitudes and behavior toward other Christians. Thus, Paul wrote:

Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,…

The “therefore” of verse 1 takes the readers back to what Paul wrote in chapters 1-3 as the basis for their need to walk worthy of the Lord. Naturally, we could never walk in a manner worthy of our Lord’s grace and mercy. The word “worthy” ( axios) means “of equal weight” and is simply calling believers to a walk that should be in balance with who they now are in Christ where all human distinctions have been removed. The point is that the Christian’s walk with Christ impacts both his inner personal life in belief and attitudes and his responsibility to other believers in the body of Christ.

Thus, to walk in a manner that balances with our new life in Christ, however, requires certain Christ-like qualities that include patience and forbearing with others as vital qualities to a worthy walk in unity with other believers.

Ephesians 4:2-3 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 4:3 making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Colossians 3:12-13 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 3:13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another,

When you think of the host of differences in people who are brought together in the body of Christ—social, religious, economic, racial, national, and age, not to mention the many personality differences—treating others with patience, putting up with them in love is a crucial ingredient for living and serving the Lord Jesus in unity, with harmony and effectiveness. My grandmother used to quote what a Quaker farmer would occasionally say to his wife to express how we need patience with others. He would say to his wife, “Everyone is very strange except thee and me, and thou art a little.”

The nature of patience ( makrothumia) as requiring forbearance toward others is brought out strongly by the words that immediately follow in both Ephesians 4:2 and Colossians 3:12-13. This demonstrates how patience should always express itself “in loving forbearance with one another.” To bear with another ( anechomai, “to bear with, put up with, endure”) is to put up with his or her faults, differences, and peculiarities (at least as it seems to us). We are to do so because we know we have our own, because we do not want to harm the unity of the body, because people are created in God’s image, and because we know God uses these very differences just as the differences of the members of our body are vital to our function (1 Cor. 12).

1. ENDURANCE AND THE IMAGES OF EXPENDED EFFORT (Part 2)

ENDURANCE AND PATIENCE IN THE COMMUNICATION AND RECEPTION OF GOD’S TRUTH

Two other passages using two different Greek words point to another important situation that requires the quality of patience, that of communicating the message of the gospel to others. Communicating God’s truth very often meets not only with resistance but hostility. This is true with non-Christians in evangelism or when seeking to teach and train Christians in the truth of the Word. When Paul preached in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10), some of the Jews and God-fearing Greeks were persuaded, but many of the Jews became jealous with the final result: Paul had to move on to Berea. Then, when he preached the resurrection to the philosophers in Athens, some began to scoff though others wanted to hear more (Acts 17:16-34). Satan, the god of this age, is against the truth and does everything in his power to blind the minds of men to God’s truth (2 Cor. 4:4f).

Unfortunately, such resistance and hostility may also come from Christians. The church at Corinth not only questioned Paul’s apostolic authority but they were critical of Paul’s person and ministry claiming, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but his physical presence is weak and his speech is of no account.” If you have sought to witness of the Savior or teach others the Word, you too may have run into resistance. It is an occasional experience for us with our teaching ministry on the Internet. Thus, witnessing, teaching, preaching, etc., requires a great deal of patience.

The first passage and the one using makrothumia is 2 Timothy 4:2. In view of the reality of the coming of the Lord and His judgment, Paul wrote, “preach the message (the Word), be persistent (or ready) whether it is convenient or inconvenient, reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching” (NET emphasis mine). This is immediately followed by the reason and need for complete patience.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 For there will be a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching. Instead following their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves, because they have a craven curiosity to hear new things. 4 And they will turn away from hearing the truth, but on the other hand they will turn aside to myths. 5 You, however, be self-controlled in all things, suffer hardship, do an evangelist’s work, fulfill your ministry.

First, in view of the fact we often face resistance, Paul did not just call for complete patience, but complete patience and instruction. The word “complete” really modifies both nouns. The reality of resistance should not send us into the closet or keep us from being willing to either witness or teach or enter into dialog. Instead, such conditions require even more instruction and dialog where possible, but always accompanied by patience. As mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:2 in connection with the command “to preach the word,” Paul also literally said, “stand by,” which means here, “be ready.” Readiness involves spiritual (controlled and led by the Spirit), academic (know what we believe and why), and emotional readiness (operating out of love with patience). Again, we need to know what we believe and why and to be ready to give a verbal defense for our faith or beliefs according to the evidence of the historical facts of the New Testament and the clear teaching of the Word (see 1 Pet. 3:13-16, especially vs. 15) but vital to one’s effectiveness is the spirit in which the communication of the Word is given. The goal is not winning an argument, but winning a soul.

The other passage calling for patience in a witnessing, teaching situation is 2 Timothy 2:24. Here Paul used a very different word, the Greek anexikakos, “bearing evil without resentment, patient.” This noun “… implied in the LXX the quality of patiently affirming a belief in face of mockery (Wis 2:19). It is linked with epieikeia (reasonableness, gentleness). The picture is that of a relentless teacher who firmly overlooks the painful consequences of his affirmations.”99 Again, the context of 2 Timothy 2:24 is one of meeting resistance from those who oppose the truth and have been duped by Satan’s trap and here, anexikakos is linked with prautes, “gentleness, courtesy, humility, considerateness.”100

2 Timothy 2:22-26 But keep away from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faithfulness, love, and peace, in company with others who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 But reject foolish and ignorant controversies, because you know they breed fights. 24 And the Lord’s slave must not be a fighter but kind toward all, an apt teacher, patient ( anexikakos), 25 correcting opponents with gentleness ( prautes). Perhaps God will grant them repentance and then knowledge of the truth 26 and they will come to their senses and escape the devil’s trap where they are held captive by him to do his will.

As this passage illustrates, coming to repentance and the knowledge of the truth is the work of God and not our skill or methodology. While our responsibility is to present the truth in dependence on the ministry of the Spirit, we also see from this passage that our attitude does play an important role and can be a tool God uses or a hindrance Satan uses in communicating the truth.

The words for enduring or bearing with something or someone are not just used of the responsibility of the messenger, but also of those receiving the message. Often the messenger must exhort his listeners to sound doctrine or to some form of spiritual action that will require submission, obedience, and spiritual change, so the listeners need to bear with the message, endure it in a positive way. So, the author of Hebrews wrote, “Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, bear with ( anechomai) my message of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you briefly” (Heb. 13:22). But sometimes because of the spiritual hardness and indifference that occurs in the hearts of people, they reach a point where they will not bear with sound doctrine. So Paul wrote, “For there will be a time when people will not tolerate ( anechomai) sound teaching. Instead following their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves, because they have a craven curiosity to hear new things” (2 Tim. 4:3).

Another interesting passage is 2 Corinthians 11:4. Here Paul used a form of sarcastic irony. “For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus different from the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the one you received, or a different gospel than the one you accepted, you put up ( anechomai) with it well enough.”

Here the apostle expressed the incongruity between what might have been expected and what actually occurred because of the way the Corinthians had so easily put up with the false teaching. They listened too willingly to these teachers or error (cf. 2 Cor. 11:19). The point being is that Christians need biblical discernment and should not bear with or put up with any kind of false teaching or teachers.

ENDURANCE, PATIENCE, AND THE COMING OF THE LORD

Finally, the words for endurance and patience are often used in a prophetic or eschatological sense in relation to (1) the coming of the Lord, (2) inheriting the promises of God, and (3) eternal rewards. In such passages we are shown how our eternal hope and the sure promises of God are very much the foundation and the means of patience with people or perseverance under difficult conditions. Hebrews 6:12 illustrates this when it says, “so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance ( makrothumia) inherit the promises.” Then, as an illustration, the author pointed to Abraham and wrote, “And so by persevering ( makrothumeo), Abraham inherited the promise” (Heb. 6:15). Moses was willing to leave the treasures of Egypt, “choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.” It was the invisible, but very real future reward that gave Moses the capacity to endure ill-treatment with the people of God.

One passage that strongly stresses this prophetic or eschatological element and the way it should impact our ability to endure and show undefined patience is James 5:1-11. In this passage, James used makrothumia, “patience” and makrothumeo, “be patient,” but in verse 11 he also used two other words discussed previously, hupomeno “endure” and hupomone, “endurance.”

Before looking at these verses, we should remember that James’ readers were severely afflicted with materialism or the spirit of worldliness (see Jam. 4:1-5). Rather than on the return of the Lord and eternal weight of glory, they were occupied with the details of this life and its comforts. As an evidence of this, they had played favorites with the wealthy (cf. 4:1-4; 2:1f) and were boasting about their profit making schemes to go into this city or that one regardless of God’s will (4:13-17). What the readers needed, therefore, was a strong reminder regarding how transient and impotent human wealth is in the long haul. As the Lord does in Matthew 6:19f, James focuses his readers on the differences between earthly and heavenly treasures.

I agree with Jim Elliff, who has observed that the people who piously care so little about eternal rewards are often killing themselves trying to accumulate a great “reward” now. They profess to be content with a “little shack in heaven,” but want a much bigger one on earth! The Bible teaches that there is nothing wrong with ambition, just as long as we focus it on heaven rather than earth.101

Thus, in 5:1-6, like a prophet of old, James addresses the wealthy of the world who have shown little or no interest in heavenly treasures or spiritual things. Here James looks outward to the world as a whole and its future doom though his purpose is to awaken his readers to the temporary nature and ultimate doom of all human wealth. These verses remind us of the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 which contrasts the state of the rich man and Lazarus after death. The rich man had much throughout his lifetime by way of the world’s wealth and blessing, but had shown no interest in spiritual things while the opposite was true of Lazarus. After death however Lazarus was in the blessed place of Abraham’s bosom and the rich man was in a place of torment.

When was the last time you saw a hearse pulling a U-Haul? We brought nothing into this world, materially speaking, and we will take nothing with us of what we accumulate (see 1 Tim. 6:6-7). We can lay up treasures in heaven that are imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away (1 Pet. 1:4). Thus, to stir his Christian readers into reality, James first declares the fact of coming judgment (v. 1) and then lists the crimes against which this judgment will be meted out (vv. 2-6). Those crimes are: the hoarding of wealth (vss. 2-3); the failure to pay wages as promised (vs. 4); luxurious living and self-indulgence (vs. 5), and the murder of innocent people (vs. 6). Naturally, all of these illustrate the mentality and behavior of those who are living as mere “earth dwellers,” which is a biblical description of those with no concern for heavenly treasure and the reality of eternity (see Rev. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8; Isa. 24:17f).

Having called attention to these eschatological facts, James then calls his readers to have patience in verses 7-12. First, he gives the essence of patience needed in the life of Christians along with an illustration of the farmer (vss. 7-9). Then with verses 10-11, he gives examples of patience and concludes with what could be considered as an evidence of patience (vs. 12). As Ron Blue has so ably put it,

From the rich, James turned to the restless. For these he again used the friendly address, “brothers.” The tone turns from stark condemnation to sensitive consolation. James excoriated the rich but encouraged the receptive. He appealed to his brethren to be patient. He defined the essence of patience, gave some examples of patience, and indicated an evidence of patience.102

1. The Essence of Patience (5:7-9).

5:7 “So be patient, brothers and sisters.” With the words “brothers and sisters” (literally, “brethren”) and “so” (literally, “therefore”), James makes a direct inference from the preceding prophetic focus to the Christian community. “Be patient” is an aorist imperative of the verb makrothumeo, which, in this context, carries with it a note of solemn urgency. They were evidently complaining against one another (vs.9) and making unnecessary oaths, perhaps because of their distress (vs.12). “Until the coming of the Lord” pointed the readers and us to the ultimate motivation. The coming ( parousia) of the Lord refers not to the judgment mentioned in verses 1-6, but to His manifestation or appearance to the body of Christ in the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13ff). This includes the Judgment Seat of Christ, the place where every Christian will be examined thoroughly, fairly, and impartially according to the quality of their works (1 Cor. 3:12f; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Rom. 14:10). This examination will result in either rewards or their loss and these rewards will determine our lot, responsibilities, and privileges for all eternity. This will naturally be followed by the glories and other blessings of eternity on which Christians are to set their hope (see 1 Pet. 1:13ff). The plain truth is that the persons we are today will determine the rewards we will receive in eternity.

To illustrate the principle, James turned his reader’s attention to the farmer with the words, “consider (literally, “behold”) the farmer who waits ( ekdechomai, “to wait, expect”) for the precious fruit of the ground being patient about it.” “Being patient” is an adverbial participle of makrothumeo which points us to the means or manner of his waiting. This is immediately followed by the words, “until it (the buried seed) receives the early and latter rains.” Two things enabled the farmer to wait patiently: the confident expectation of the rains which would cause the planted seeds to sprout, grow, and come to harvest, and the valuable fruit at the time of harvest. This illustrates the very essence of patience—the anticipation of the rewards of one’s labor.

5:8 You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord’s coming is near. With these words James made the first application to the believer’s life here on earth. Like the farmer who waits for the early and latter rain, so the Christian waits expectantly for the Lord knowing He is not only coming to reward our service, but is near. Also, like the farmer who waits for the precious fruit, so the Christian believes in the eternal value of the fruit of his labor on earth. The Lord’s sure return (parousia) should stimulate every believer to patience and strength of heart. His coming has drawn near in that it is imminent and is the next great prophetical event in the life of the church.

5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters,… With these words, the application becomes more specific. A lack of patience and failing to live in the light of the coming of the Lord often leads to grumbling against others. These Christians were subject to murmuring against those, especially the wealthy, who were oppressing them or treating them unfairly. Life is not fair and we are all subject to mistreatment by others (by Christians and non-Christians alike) whether done consciously or unconsciously. The temptation is to groan or complain against those we think are responsible. “Grumble” is stenazo, “to groan, sigh.” Stenazo may speak of inner distress more than open complaint or grumbling though both may be involved.

What is forbidden is not the loud and bitter denunciation of others but the unexpressed feeling of bitterness or the smothered resentment that may express itself in a groan or a sigh. James uses the Greek me with the present imperative to prohibit the continuation of this hateful practice. To continue it would result in judgment.…103

James quickly adds, “so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates!” To continue on their present path of grumbling or sighing against others was a failure to rest in God’s final judgment when He will make all things right. For Christians this is the Judgment Seat of Christ that occurs after the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13ff) and not the Great White Throne Judgment which occurs at the end of the millennium and is only for unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15).

Grumbling against others whether expressed inwardly or openly is one means by which people often seek to take matters into their own hands and where, in a sense, they act as judges themselves. To grumble is to fail to live in the certainty of the return of the Lord and to fail to recognize the extreme shortness of this life as James has previously pointed out, “What is your life like? For you are a puff of smoke that appears for a short time and then vanishes.”

Thus, living patiently in view of the Lord’s coming has a double focus here. One anticipates eternal blessing and rewards and the other seeks to avoid the loss of rewards. Behind this focus is the whole subject of the Judgment Seat (the Bema) of Christ. This is a subject that is rather extensive in the New Testament, but unfortunately, very little teaching is devoted to it in spite of the many passages that deal with rewards or their loss in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus spoke of rewards some 16 plus times in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 19-21; 18; 10:41, 42; 16:27; 18; 25, 26, 29) and Paul spoke of this truth over and over again. One illustration is his word to slaves in Colossians 3:22-25.

3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect; not only when they are watching—like those who are strictly people-pleasers—but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. 3:23 Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, 3:24 because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward (literally, “the reward of your inheritance”). Serve the Lord Christ. 3:25 For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there are no exceptions (i.e., no partiality with the Lord).

Slaves were to serve their masters and all Christians are to do their work as a service to the Lord. Being devoted to Christ and doing our work as an obedience to Him will result in rewards at the Bema seat of Christ. The principle is that slaves (and so workers today) could accept unjust treatment because of the assurance Christ would reward them in the future with heavenly treasures if they served as an obedience to Him without grumbling, etc. But the opposite is also a fact of life. If one does wrong (retaliates, does his work half-heartedly, murmurs, etc.), he will be repaid for the wrong done (loss of rewards).

Living with patience and endurance rather than grumbling is truly connected with how well we live in view of the return of the Lord Jesus, the Judge of the Bema. When soloist George Beverley Shea was asked what he would like to be when Christ returned, he said, “On pitch!”104 If He finds us grumbling under our breath, we certainly won’t be on pitch. The Lord Jesus has taught us that wise servants live watchfully for their master’s arrival. He says.

Luke 12:35-38 “Get dressed for service and keep your lamps burning; 12:36 be like men waiting for their master to come back from the wedding celebration, so that when he comes and knocks they can open the door for him immediately. 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he comes! I tell you the truth, he will dress himself for serving and have them take their place at the table, and he will come and serve them! 12:38 Even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them alert, blessed are those slaves.

1. Examples of Patience (5:10-11)

Having used the farmer to show the essence of patience, James then turned to the authoritative Old Testament, to God’s Word, to give two key examples of those who experienced affliction, but who did so with patience and endurance—the prophets and Job.

5:10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord’s name.

James calls attention to the prophets as those who spoke in the Lord’s name. This addition points them out as servants of the Lord who faithfully proclaimed His Word regardless of the various circumstances of affliction they received. How could they do it? Because they did so with patience knowing that in the long run, the Lord would make things right.

Although James refers to “the prophets” as a group, Jeremiah certainly stands out as one who endured mistreatment with patience. He was put in the stocks (Jer 20:2) thrown into prison (32:2), and lowered into a miry dungeon (38:6); yet he persisted in his ministry without bitterness or recrimination. Such men constitute a model (hypodeigma) for believers who are oppressed and mistreated.105

5:11 Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (NASB)

James then turned to Job, another well-known and respected Old Testament example of one who endured great suffering. Only now, rather than use patience, the makrothumia family of words concerning Job, James switched to the use of hupomeno and hupomone. Job is one who persevered with great endurance, but he grew demanding over time—he was impatient with God! Nevertheless, the Lord honored Job’s perseverance with multiplied blessings at the end of his suffering (cf. Job 42:12) and this is the point—God blessed Job for his endurance. Thus, James summed it all up with the words, “The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” Our patience and endurance will not be forgotten because of the very nature of God as compassionate and merciful.

The Evidence of Patience (5:12)

5:12 And above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. But let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no, so that you may not fall into judgment.

It is when people are under stress that they are often inclined to human strategies to deal with their problems. Evidently, with James’ audience, one such solution was the use of language that is inappropriate like swearing an oath. “For those who truly demonstrate the persistence and patience prescribed for believers, there is no need to invoke an oath, whether by heaven or by earth, that their word is certain.”106

May we not lose sight of the important place the sure and imminent coming of the Lord and the realities that accompany and follow it must play in maintaining both endurance and patience. For more on this whole emphasis, see the author’s study on the Doctrine of the Judgments and Rewards on our web site. Also, a tremendously helpful book on this is Erwin Lutzer’s book, Triumph and Tears at the Judgment Seat of Christ: Your Eternal Reward, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998. This book is a must!

1. Conclusion

My wife and I were recently faced with an experience that illustrates some of the issues in endurance and patience. In June of this year (1999), my beautiful and faithful wife of forty years was diagnosed with extreme osteoporosis which, as it turned out, caused multiple myeloma (cancer of the plasma cells and bone marrow). My wife’s oncologist prescribed a very powerful drug administered by IV to help rebuild bone but this made her very sick and caused extreme pain. As a result, her primary physician referred her to a bone specialist to see if there was another medication that she could tolerate better. We arrived at 3 p.m. for her appointment and within a few minutes were taken to an exam room to wait for the doctor. My wife was having a great deal of pain in her spine and hip when we arrived so we naturally hoped the doctor would be on time. At 4:15, we still had not seen the doctor. This was testing my wife’s ability to endure the pain, but also our patience with the doctor. As we waited, I began to think some negative thoughts like, “Why can’t he run his office more efficiently? Is he one of those doctors who crowds in too many patients and then spends only a few minutes with them?” But because of his reputation and my wife’s need, we endured and sought to be patient by God’s grace.

Finally, the doctor came in. As it turned out, he had been delayed because of an emergency and was caring for someone in great need. We were so thankful that our wait had been well worth it! The doctor was caring, concerned, careful, and extremely thorough in his evaluation of my wife’s records. In addition, he demonstrated that he was on the cutting edge of many issues that concerned her problems. In essence, her consultation with this doctor was more than worth the long wait. Knowing this beforehand would certainly have made it easier to endure patiently.

Our experience reminds us of two truths. First, we need to endure life’s pressures and be patient with others because, as with this doctor, we don’t know what is going on behind the scenes. Remember, though Job endured, he became somewhat demanding and impatient with what God was doing, but there were things going on behind the scenes—the conflict with Satan—about which Job was totally in the dark. Interestingly, when God did deal with Job’s impatience, He still never told Job about the issues of chapters 1 and 2. Job just needed to learn to rest in the sovereign God of the universe. Second, our capacity for patience strongly depends on our confidence in God’s person and eternal purposes. Though the doctor was not, he could have been a great disappointment, but the Lord Jesus, the great physician and sovereign all-wise Lord, can never let us down. So, as James told his readers, we are to strengthen our hearts because the Lord’s coming is near (Jam. 5:8). When He comes, he will wipe away every tear, right every wrong, and reward every faithfulness.

Endurance and patience give us the capacity to plod on with joyous, hopeful, and loving determination in spite of disappointments, rejection, persecution, and other pressures that might otherwise cause us to throw in the towel. These two qualities give us the willingness and capacity to continue on because of a hope fixed on God’s person as one who is compassionate and merciful, and on God’s purposes and eternal rewards.

The apostle Paul, as with all the apostles, suffered tremendous hardships for the sake of Christ and their calling in the ministry of the gospel. He was deserted, maligned, imprisoned, beaten, stoned: you name it, he suffered it! Yet Paul never gave up. He was what one might call a plodder (see 2 Tim. 1:15-16; 4:10; and cf. 2 Cor. 10:10 with 11:6, 23-28 ). This demonstrated the staying power of great maturity throughout his life right up to his death.

Howard Hendricks, a well-known conference speaker, teacher at Dallas Seminary, and leader of men, once looked out over an audience of young Campus Crusade for Christ trainees and commented, “Gentlemen, I’m not impressed.” His point, as he went on to explain, was that he would only be impressed if they were still committed to ministry and the service of the Savior forty years later. The race God has called us to is tough. One hundred yard dashers won’t make it. This truth is classically illustrated for us in the life of Paul. In 2 Timothy 4:7 toward the close of Paul’s life, Paul could make three statements that we should all pray that we will be able to make. But Paul made these statements and they were true of him because he saw his life as a drink offering, a sacrifice poured out for the Savior and because he lived with a view to heavenly treasures. I believe it was this underlying commitment and mental attitude that gave him his staying power.

He wrote: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” In each of these verbs, the apostle used the perfect tense which may emphasize the results (intensive perfect) from the standpoint of the author or the completion of action or a process (consummative perfect). In view of the statement that follows both concepts are in view though the emphasis is on the fact of the completion of his work on earth. But with its completion, in view of the Lord’s sure return and reward, Paul quickly added, “in the future there is laid up for me (i.e., as an abiding result), the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”

By the use of the term fought with the perfect tense, there is a sense of finality with victory. The battle was over and now he faced the rewards of eternity. This also reminds us, however, that life and especially our ministries involve us in a life-and-death struggle. God never said it would be easy and we should never expect it to be so. Discipleship is costly. The tendency is to give in, to throw in the towel, but to have fought the good fight is to have continued to fight courageously and bravely regardless of the opponents.

To this element of finality there is the added emphasis of completion with the word “I have finished the course.” The word “finished,” the Greek, teleo, means “to finish, complete, arrive at the goal.” Again, this word plus the perfect tense lays strong emphasis on the idea of completion and the fact that this life is temporary, but it does have eternal ramifications. With the words “the course” (literally “the race”), the apostle pictures God’s plan for his life as a race to be run. It pointed to the ministry God ordained for Paul with all the hurdles and obstacles that were a part of the course laid out for him. And it is no different for any of us. This is brought out in Hebrews 12:1-2, but we must keep our eyes on the Savior and on the finish line.

Paul was a plodder. He never gave up because of the hurdles; he persevered. He was a man driven by eternal values and biblical objectives.

“I have kept the faith.” The word “kept” is the Greek, tereo, which means “to protect, guard,” but in this context it means, “to remain faithful to” something. That something is “the faith,” the body of revealed truth, the Word. Paul kept the faith in three senses: He kept the Word near his heart—it was his source of comfort and strength; he was obedient to it; and he passed it on to others. He remained faithful and true to the faith, i.e., to the challenges and responsibilities that living and preaching the faith brought upon his life as a servant of God and of men.

But we might think about why the apostle made these statements? He was writing to Timothy to encourage him to patiently endure, to keep him joyfully plodding on in the race God had laid out for this young man. This encouragement to endure or persevere is an element found throughout this pastoral book, a book that calls for maturity and leadership.

Well, just how does Paul seek to promote this endurance? Throughout 2 Timothy Paul used one means after another to teach and encourage perseverance or endurance. He challenged, commanded, instructed, reminded, warned, and illustrated the need of endurance both negatively and positively. But why so much on endurance? Because, as just mentioned, a lot of people and even churches are great starters; they are good in the hundred-yard dash, but they are no good in the endurance events. Life and the ministry is an endurance event, indeed, it’s a marathon if not a decathlon!

Review Questions and Group Discussion

1. Using your standard dictionary, please define:

Endurance

Perseverance

Patience

2. How does endurance differ from perseverance?

3. In New Testament terms, what is associated with patience?

4. What is associated with endurance and perseverance?

5. In Hebrews 12:1, the writer teaches us that we have a “great cloud of witnesses surrounding us”. These witnesses are cited in Hebrews 11. In your own words, describe the endurance, perseverance, and patience of the following:

Noah

Abraham

Moses

6. What trait is found in each one of these witnesses?

7. In Hebrews 12:1-3, we are told to “run with endurance the race that is set before us”. What example does the writer give us and why?

8. How does the writer link discipline with endurance (vv. 4-7)?

9. Read 2 Timothy 4:5-8

What encouragement is Paul giving to Timothy?

As Paul nears his “departure”, what allows him to persevere?

10. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

How is love connected to patience?

What fruit of patient love is mentioned in these verses?

11. Read James 5:7-11

With what does James compare patience for the Lord’s return?

What does he warn them will happen if they lose patience and complain about each other?

Who does he use as an example to encourage them in patience?

What example does he use for endurance?

12. What challenges or hardships are you enduring as a follower of Jesus Christ?

13. What hardships are you trying to endure in which the goal is an earthly reward?

14. Describe situations in which you doubt you will persevere?

15. Write down the initials of fellow Christians with whom you have little or no patience and the reasons.

16. What will you do to love them as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13?

GROUP DISCUSSION

The apostle Paul was driven by eternal values and biblical objectives. How can you acquire that same drive and cultivate biblical perseverance and patience to finish your race?