Purposing to Persevere

2 Peter 1.6

The purpose of this life is to prepare you for the next one.

"and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness," 2 Peter 1:6 (ESV)

Steadfastness is the ability to "remain under" God's training regiment for your growth and for His glory.

We see this in Christ:

"...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." Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

We hear this from Christ:

"But the one who endures to the end will be saved." Matthew 24:13 (ESV)

Adoniram Judson after suffering on the mission field in Burma wrote Luther Rice who was about to recruit missionaries to join Judson in Burma:

"Send humble, quiet, persevering men . . . willing to take the lowest place . . . who live near to God and are willing to suffer all things for Christ's sake."

Endurance is a Holy Spirit given determination to squeeze all the grace we can out of the heartaches and trials of our lives.

Listen to Paul's preparation of Timothy for a life of ministry:

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God," 2 Timothy 1:8 (ESV)

"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 2:3 (ESV)

"As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Timothy 4:5 (ESV)

I. Reasons Why "Remaining Under" Difficult Circumstances is Crucial for God's People:

- **It's our calling: Like Jesus, we have been called to suffering and enduring not comfort and ease.**

"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 (ESV)

"For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ***For to this you have been called,*** because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." 1 Peter 2:18-21 (ESV)

- **It is necessary: Endurance is necessary to our continued growth in Christ-likeness.**

"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 (ESV)

"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." James 1:2-4 (ESV)

- **It helps us be helpful: Endurance through suffering enables us to minister God's comfort to one another**.

"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." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

- It is evidential: Endurance is evidence of the power of the resurrection not of personal determination.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." 2 Corinthians 4:7

"I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world. Whether you can consent to see her departure to a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? Whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death?" Adoniram Judson asking Anne Hazeltine's father for her hand in marriage.

II. How Do We Grow in Endurance/Steadfastness?

- **Continual Reflection on Christ and the Cross. (Hebrews 12:1-4)**

"Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." Hebrews 12:3-4 (ESV)

- **Have a Sincere Trust in the Wisdom and Love of your Heavenly Father. (Hebrews 12:7-14)**

"It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" Hebrews 12:7 (ESV)

"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11 (ESV)

- **Foster A Deep Commitment to the Perseverance of our Fellow Christians (Romans 15:1-7)**

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Romans 15:4 (ESV)

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:5-6

- **Learn to Prize and to Prioritize Eternal Glory. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)**

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)

Group Study Questions

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1. **The purpose of this life is to prepare us for the next one.** How does keeping eternity in view change the way we approach the difficulties, disappointments, and responsibilities of everyday life?

2. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before Him. What do you find most encouraging about Jesus' example of perseverance? How can looking to Him help you when you are tempted to grow weary or discouraged?

3. Peter calls us to add steadfastness to our faith. What are some circumstances in which it is especially difficult to remain faithful to Christ? What might it look like to trust and obey Him in those situations?

4. Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2-4 teach that God uses trials to produce endurance, character, and hope in us. Can you think of a difficult season in your life that God used to deepen your faith or make you more like Christ? What did you learn about Him through it?

5. Second Corinthians 1:3-4 reminds us that God comforts us in our afflictions so that we can comfort others. How have you experienced God's comfort through another believer? How might God use some of your own experiences to encourage someone else?

6. Hebrews 12:3 encourages us to consider Christ so that we do not grow weary or fainthearted. What are some practical ways we can keep the person, work, and suffering of Jesus at the center of our thinking throughout the week?

7. Hebrews 12:7-11 describes God's loving discipline and training in our lives. How does knowing that our Heavenly Father is wise, loving, and purposeful change the way we respond when life doesn't go as we hoped or planned?

8. Romans 15:5-6 emphasizes the importance of Christian encouragement and unity. What are some practical ways we can help one another persevere in faith? Is there someone in your life who might particularly need your encouragement right now?

9. Second Corinthians 4:16-18 contrasts what is temporary with what is eternal. What are some things that compete for our attention and affection in this life? How can we become more intentional about investing in what has eternal value?

10. **Personal Application:** What is one area of your life where God may be calling you to greater steadfastness right now? What truth from this study can help you persevere, and how can this group pray for and encourage you?

Christian endurance is not simply gritting our teeth and trying harder. It is looking to Jesus, trusting our Father's wisdom and love, leaning on the encouragement of fellow believers, and fixing our eyes on the eternal glory that awaits us. We persevere because God's grace sustains us.