

“The Imperative of Enduring”
(ä-ne'-kho), (hü-po-me'-no)
2 Timothy 4:1-4, 2 Thessalonians 1:4, Hebrews 12:2

I have in sermons past, shared with you this video. It is an exemplary illustration of what we are going to study in today's message: “The Imperative of Enduring” Sometimes it seems like as we look at the world around us, life seems to have become a “Death Crawl” and we are carrying burdens that are weighing us down to the point of exhaustion, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. God is going to get us through this and we will be an even stronger church than ever before.

Endure: To suffer something painful or difficult with patience.

I have watched as our nation has recently endured great heartache and the painful scars inflicted on our once God-fearing nation. Have we always been the epitome of love and kindness? No, not at all. Have we from our nation's birth succeeded in achieving all of the lofty ideals of freedom and justice for all with malice toward none? Hardly. Has the United States of America been the bastion of virtue and enshrinement of the Divine's values? Not ever.

But what we have been, until recently, is a nation that has endured. We have drawn strength of courage and survival from the infinite supply of God's virtue as we have largely sought to honor the Judeo-Christian principles which are the bedrock of our social footing and the guiding light of our founding fathers. While the Civil War nearly tore our union asunder, it was a reckoning long overdue and a correction to the social hypocrisy that espoused a far different practice that the “all men are created equal” declaration embodied. Countless millions have endured the pain and suffering this dichotomy between reality and racial injustice has inflicted.

Our nation has endured much, but we are faced today with what Abraham Lincoln called, “A House Divided”. Such a nation he said, could not long endure. Sadly, we are enduring in our society the reaping of what we have sown by rejecting the principles and precepts of God's Word and His design for human behaviors.

I have often shared with you the illustration of how Secret Service agents are trained to spot counterfeit currency. How do these federal agents train to spot counterfeits? Not by studying the countless variations counterfeit money, but with the real thing. They know the real things so well inside and out. The feel, the markings, the watermarks the security strip. They know all aspects of the genuine article so well that when they encounter the false, it is obvious to them.

THE POINT – the best way to decide if something is counterfeit is by handling and becoming familiar with the real thing.

In cults, such as Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Islam and others, as well as followers of the many health, wealth and prosperity preachers, tragically, many of their recruits are from Baptist churches.

Why? There are a number of reasons that I have encountered when I have talked with people about their decisions to leave the Baptist faith and join up with a cult. Sometimes it's an ego thing. They feel there is something exciting and perhaps even fashionable to become a Muslim, for instance.

Back in 2014, a father looking for his daughter dialed her cell. She answered, but, officials say, she didn't tell him that she was on her way to Syria to join ISIS. She was just late for class, that's all, Ibrahim's daughter told him on Friday, according to the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office, which filed a runaway report.

The American girl of Sudanese descent also kept quiet about her two girlfriends, Americans of Somali descent, who were flying with her to Turkey by way of Germany.

Two more girls, sisters... Those two had told their father, Ali Farah, that they were going to the library. But when Farah got home from work, a visitor came calling, according to the documents. Apparently, it was Ibrahim. Farah should check to see if his daughters' passports were missing, the visitor told him – just like his daughter's passport was. Sure enough, they were gone, along with \$2,000 in cash. The two families called the FBI. They said they thought the girls were on their way to Turkey. The agency put out a notice on their passports. German authorities intercepted the trio, ages 15, 16 and 17, at Frankfurt airport and put them on a plane back to the United States, where they were greeted by FBI agents. The three girls were questioned and released. Two U.S. officials say they had planned to join militants with ISIS, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

It seems that people no longer care about choosing a church or a religion that teaches truth. The fastest growing religious affiliation in the United States is NONE. Choosing a church becomes more a token of convenience if they choose to even have a religious affiliation. The Bible's command to, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers" is pretty much ignored in today's society. We have seen many of our Baptist children walk away from all they were taught in Sunday School for years because they fall in love with a non-believer. They "turn away from the truth" and thus become apostates, turning their backs on revealed truth because the importance of sound doctrinal teaching is far down their list of life priorities, somewhere below what cell phone they're going to buy next. The value system of today's culture seldom involves or includes any commitment to an organized family of Christian believers. "All roads lead to Heaven", "Truth is what you decide it is", and "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are a good person" are just several of the mantras that countless millions have adopted as their life philosophy.

In 1 Timothy 4:1–2 (NKJV), we are told, ***“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,***

Enduring the discipline of “sound doctrine” is not something many millennials or gen-Xers are interested in. Either because they have decided it's passe or out of simple rebellion towards anything that smacks of an established norm or finds its origin in previous generations.

Falling from the faith because they were never firm in the faith. They never knew the deep doctrines of the Bible. As our culture becomes more and more anti-Christian, True Christians will stand out more and more like sore thumbs.

Please note I said “true Christians” because many so-called Christians and Christian churches have fallen from the true faith. Their doctrines (teachings) have changed to reflect the values of the world, not those true doctrines of God as portrayed in Scripture.

Many preachers and churches water down the word and ignore the depth of Scripture of sound or healthy doctrines. They start with the verse and move on to some social and cultural issues. They are "tickling the ears" of their audience.

I am called to teach and preach scriptural doctrine, not just some cherry picked, pleasant, feel good, Bible stories. John MacArthur believes, as I do, that the greatest threat to the church of today is a lack of discernment. The ability to differentiate between truth and lie, between what is holy and what is heresy. This discernment can only be achieved when the church returns to “enduring” the study of sound doctrine.

The church going crowd in today’s world rejects sound doctrine: “but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears,” they are seeking out feel good messages. Why? Because their ears are itching. People are searching for teachers and preachers that will teach what they want to hear. And they (the false teachers and the feel good preachers) are out there. You can turn on your TV and search out and find the “Church of Feeling Good about Yourself.”

I believe all of these decisions, however, are descended from one basic delusion...people do not know the real thing. They buy into the counterfeit because they do not know what they believe, they do not know the word of God, they are not familiar with the basic doctrines that the Bible teaches. Consequently, they quickly fall for false teachers who misuse scripture to tickle the ears, to appeal to the sinful nature of people. That is not the most tragic aspect of this, however. The greater problem is that they have become so anesthetized to truth that they do not care! Here is the problem of the greater church today. And as our nation continues to endure the consequences of a godless society, the importance of “speaking the truth in love” has never been more urgent.

Come with me to our text today as we explore the word “Endure” as our focus this morning.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 NKJV

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

There are two harsh realities we need to embrace this morning. First, “The time will come” in Paul’s admonition to Timothy, that time has come. It is today. Secondly, the, “They” in the verse is not talking about the world, “they” is referring to the church! “They” is “Usn’s”! It is the

profound prediction of the apostate church that Paul is so concerned about here. Apostasy, the turning away, the deliberate rejection of revealed truth in the church is a malignant disease that not only destroys the souls of men and women within the church walls, but completely debilitates any effort to obey the Great Commission. Today's congregations appreciate little the importance of missions, both at home and abroad. Giving to and supporting the Cooperative Program is not a luxury or an ad hominem option for the church of Jesus Christ. It is a moral and a biblical imperative! It is the command of Jesus Christ Himself that we "Go"!

I am led this morning to zero in specifically on that word "endure" in our text this morning. There are several portraits or concepts of "endure" in Scripture that, in the course of my studies this week, have blessed my soul and I am excited to share these truths with you today.

I. We are Called to "Endure"

A. Endure Our Equipping

Remember our earlier definition of the word "endure"?

Endure: To suffer something painful or difficult with patience.

This word, "endure" in the Greek is **ä-ne'-kho** and means in the original language, "To hold up under, to hold one's self erect and firm, to sustain, to bear, to endure."

We are told that good posture is essential to good health. There is a spiritual posture that is important to our survival as Christians. Just as good physical posture requires focus and attention to the effort to achieve it, so to we attain good spiritual posture only by being determined to train our hearts and minds to stand upright and firm in the truth of God's Word. Only then will we, ***"Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."***

When I was earning my degrees, I would often excitedly say to my wife, "The professor gave me an A!" to which she would reply, "The professor didn't GIVE you anything...you earned it." And she of course was right. Many hours of reading were something to endure. Theology can be boring. Many late nights spent reading chapter after chapter from multiple textbooks was something to endure. And then the writing of the countless research papers was certainly an endurance. But it was that endurance that equipped me to be a more useful instrument of God's purpose. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, the apostle writes,

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, King James Version)

Notice Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit does not say "a preacher", or "a deacon" "...that needeth not to be ashamed". He says, "a workman". We are all called to be laborers in God's kingdom. We are all called to be workers in the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we cannot do that unless we have endured the patient acquisition of an accurate understanding of the teachings of the Bible.

B. Endure Other's Lack of Endurance

It is painful and difficult for us to exist in a world which is becoming increasingly anti-God. Especially when so much of the behavior is being preached from the pulpits of our nation's churches. When so many congregations are on a fast train to destruction and they don't want to hear what they don't want to hear.

And we have whole groups of people that will follow them because they do not know the word of God. Think about it. Many do not want to know the Word. The fact is, the gospel will offend many. They do not want to know that they are sinners bound for hell. They do not want to know their lives are an offense to God and that God will punish. They want justification for their sins. So, they seek after preaching that will not offend them, but make them feel good about themselves. They don't want to endure the difficult task of getting the old man by the nap of the neck and dragging him (or her) screaming and kicking to an old rugged cross where that old nature, that old life can be crucified with Christ.

Think about politicians. Those running for office, wanting to get votes, and in the end they want to get power. So, they say and make promises that they can never possibly ever deliver on, yet people like what they say, their ears being tickled, and they will cast their votes accordingly. Vladimir Lenin, founder of modern communism, calls these people, "useful idiots."

There are plenty of preachers like that, seeking "useful idiots," those that will send them money to the address at the bottom of their TV screens, to help them buy a new \$60 million jet because they have grown tired of the old one.

Those who do not know sound doctrine or worse yet, those who reject sound Bible doctrine because it is not what they want to hear, "they will heap up for themselves teachers." And there are plenty of teachers and preachers out there ready to be "heaped up." Those words "heap up" in the Greek, means to build up, like a wall around them, teachers that will teach what they want to hear, to be entertained, to make them feel good.

There is an old saying among true Bible preachers, we are to afflict those in comfort and to comfort those afflicted. It is in this vein that Paul instructs young Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:2 (NKJV) Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

God called me to preach the word. Not to entertain.

God did not call me to tell folks that God want to bless them with wealth and prosperity, but to preach from the word that we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. We are sinners bound for hell and need of serious repentance (Rev 3:17).

I will not preach that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and that Jesus is a way to heaven, but God called me to preach from the word that Jesus is the only way to heaven. (John 14:6)

I will never preach that you can love the world and Jesus too, but God called me to preach from the word that to be friends with the world is to be enemies with God (James 4:4).

God didn't call to preach that by accepting Jesus that your life will be all cheery and happiness, but to preach from the word that by becoming a true follower of Jesus, the world will hate and reject you because it first hated and rejected Him (John 15:18).

God did not call me to tell you that after coming to Jesus you can sit back, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry (Luke 12:19), but to tell you from the word that Jesus commanded his followers to take up their cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Carrying a Cross is hard work, Jesus Himself demonstrated that sometimes the cross becomes so heavy we will fall beneath the load. Life in Christ is not a sprint to the finish line, it is an endurance, a fight to the end that we are called into.

2 Timothy 2:3 King James Version

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

C. Endure Our Persecution

Loved ones, we are already witnessing the world that George Orwell in his science fiction novel, "1984" which he published in 1949. In that world, "Big Brother" decided what everyone had to think, talk, and live. "Newspeak" was the only acceptable language of that future world in which any deviation from the words of that new cultural language would result in severe punishment.

The insidious work-around that evil has come up with is that when it comes to freedom of speech or freedom of religion in a nation whose Constitution clearly states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech...", is to establish "Big Brother" social media empires that now do have the power to curtail free speech and ultimately freedom of religion.

Much of what the Bible teaches doctrinally is now already defined as "hate speech" and would be summarily deleted from Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. You can now be locked out, blocked out, and in some places you could be knocked out for proclaiming that the divine design decrees that sexual activity is to be confined within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman for life, clear teaching against homosexuality and transgenderism, not to mention abortion. All positions and more position the full gospel teaching, preaching, proclaiming believer to be subject to all forms of social persecution. And make no mistake about it. Get ready for it. Jesus Himself declares:

Matthew 10:22 King James Version

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

II. We Endure Because Christ Endured

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

There is a second word in the Greek that Paul uses in the New Testament that appears as “endure” in our English Bible translations. It’s **hü-po-me'-no**.

It carries the emphasis of one who does, “not recede or flee” but who, “bears bravely and calmly: ill treatments.” Jesus did not recede or flee from the cross of Calvary. Jesus bore it bravely and calmly.

One of the golden moments of our trip to Israel was One of those was in this dark, damp, cobblestone basement of what is now a church on the Via Dolorosa. Two thousand years ago it wasn't; it was part of the palace of Pontius Pilate, the Governor. And I realized that I was standing on stones where Jesus was humiliated in front of a howling mob by some hardened Roman soldiers. The guide showed us some markings that were scratched into the stones there; probably by some Roman soldiers. He said, "This was a board for a crude game that they called The Game of Kings, and the soldiers loved to play it. In fact, they may have played it with Jesus on those very stones.

I was reminded that in Matthew 27 what Jesus endured,

"Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around Him, stripped Him, put a scarlet robe on Him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and put a staff in His right hand and knelt in front of Him and mocked Him. 'Hail, King of the Jews!' they said. They spit on Him, took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again. After they had mocked Him, they took off the robe and put His own clothes on Him and then they led Him away to crucify Him."

The winner of the game got to pick a prisoner, who they would get to "honor" as “king”. They would bring Him out and they would subject Him to all kinds of humiliation. That was their prize. In this case, it was the King of Kings, and He created those soldiers. All the proper symbols were there. There was a robe, a crown, a scepter. The words were right - The King of the Jews. But it was all mockery.

Oh, you probably say with me, "Man, that's ugly. That is perverted." Well, it is. But some of us may be playing an updated version of The Game of The King today. Could it be that you're saying all the right words about Jesus, "He's the King! He's the Lord!" You go to the right meetings; you carry all the right symbols: a Bible, Christian literature, church involvement. But it's all a mockery. Those soldiers had no intention of actually doing what Jesus said.

Sadly, too many Christians are playing the Game of Kings with their choices today. Ask yourself today, who is the king of your family relationships, your money, your music, your mouth? Who is really running things? And like the Roman soldiers who gambled at the foot of the cross for the robe of Jesus, so too many so-called Christians are playing games at the cross, while Jesus does all the enduring. The tragedy is that people who refuse to endure here, will have to endure

something far more terrible in eternity. The question, the choice really, is “What am I willing to endure here and now for the Jesus Who endured more than any human possible could?”

Are you willing this morning to “endure” the scrutiny of God’s Holy Spirit into the nooks and crannies of your heart and mind? Are you here this morning wondering how you appear to God. Not how you appear to the world, but to God.

If you are not offended by the word, then something is wrong. The Word tells us that all have sinned (Romans 3:23).

The most dangerous prayer in the Bible is:

Psalm 139:23–24 (NKJV) 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Ask God to reveal what is offensive to Him in you. Yes, the gospel is offensive, but it should offend you to righteousness. It should offend you to your knees in repentance begging Almighty God for forgiveness. Ask God to clean you. And you will be made clean by the blood of Jesus that was shed for your sins. It is only by the blood of Jesus that we are cleansed and made right before God. The world does not want to hear this, but that is the Gospel. We are sinners, but Jesus can make us whole.

Jesus crawled a death crawl onto an old rugged cross for you and for me. Jesus only asks one thing, YOUR BEST, YOUR VERY BEST! Don’t quit, Don’t quit...give me (He says) YOUR BEST...JUST TEN MORE STEPS... You may not be able to see the end in sight of this death crawl, but HE does. We are called only to endure until the end.