

Endurance, Discipline, Holiness

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[0 : 0 0] who endured from sinners such hostility against themselves, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. One of the questions that's so often asked about the Christian life is this.

Why is being a Christian so hard? Why are there the trials, the difficulties, the pressures, the testings, when I had it so much easier before I was converted?

And then there's the kind of questioning, even that questions God's ways with his people from God's people themselves who are undergoing particularly heavy burdens. You know, like the psalmist in Psalm 73, when he cried out, I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for they have no pangs until death, their bodies are fat and sleek, they're not in trouble as others are, they're not stricken like the rest of mankind.

And reading these words, you can sense that the psalmist himself was in hardship, that he was in trouble, that he was in pain, because he was a believer, because he was someone who sought the Lord, who sought to follow the Lord.

What's it about the Christian life that requires endurance and discipline? All the answers here, in fact, the answer we see in verse 14, the theme that we've been looking at very much in our midweek meetings, is the answer is holiness.

[1 : 3 5] That growth in holiness that verse 14 tells us, that holiness without which no one will see God, that holiness that's formed and shaped and developed through the endurance and discipline that are absolutely essential in your growth as a Christian, in your growth in holiness, in your life, in your lifestyle that's devoted to God.

And that growth in holiness through endurance and discipline that leads you to that separation from all that would separate you from that relationship that you have with the God of love.

So, as we're progressing through these latter chapters in Hebrews, then we're coming to ask this most basic of questions. What does it mean to be a Christian? Maybe even more precise, what does it mean to be a mature Christian?

And to help us to answer that question, well, the answer's here before us. Three pointers, if you like, in this passage. Three words that help us to form the answer to what it means to be a Christian, to be a mature Christian, to be someone who's growing in the Lord, to be someone who's growing in faith, someone who's growing in mature thinking, mature speech, mature action, that shows and identifies that that person is growing in the Lord, that she's growing in faith and growing in holiness.

Three words here that help us to answer this question about what it is that shows that someone's a mature Christian. Three words, you've got them in your notes, well, the notes that should be there.

[3 : 2 4] Endurance, discipline, holiness. So let's look at what we're told here in the passage. Endurance. Now, when we're reading from the start of chapter 12 there, you'll notice endurance is repeated.

There's repetition. And you know wherever that you see repetition in Scripture, you know that's for a reason. And there's certainly repetition and endurance. You saw that in verse 1. Let us run with endurance.

The race that's set before us. And then in verse 2, we see of Jesus who endured the cross. And then in verse 3, consider him who endured from sinners, hostility from sinners.

And even verse 7, it's for discipline that you have to endure. So endurance is a feature of the Christian life, the very core of the Christian life.

I put the definition, the best definition that I've found for endurance. Steadfast adherence to a course of action in spite of difficulties and testings.

[4 : 32] Steadfast adherence to a course of action in spite of difficulties and testings. Now you see that in ordinary human life. You see that, you follow athletics, you follow cycling for example.

You watch these cyclists, these professional cyclists. And they're competing in these incredibly difficult races. Tour de France for example. And when you watch them, you see how they're straining.

Straining with every muscle. Straining, we would say going through the pain barrier as they're going up these hills, these mountains. They're straining. They're going through that pain barrier but they're not giving up.

They're not giving up because they're straining to compete, to win that prize. And they've got that total commitment. They know the test is tough. They wouldn't do it unless they knew it.

But they're not going to flinch from enduring what they have to endure for the sake of the glory of victory at that finishing line. And you know the Christian life is like that.

[5 : 34] Like that endurance race. It's that testing of your faith. It's the trials. It's the buffeting. That you're going to face for your faith.

It's that narrow road that Jesus spoke of that all who are His walk on. It's the afflictions that you're going to face and do face. Like giving to you to fit you for heaven.

To strengthen you. To strengthen you in your mind. To strengthen you in your will. To strengthen you in your heart. And remember, remember that the endurance that you undertake as a Christian, remember, you're not on your own.

You have an example. A pioneer. One who endured suffering for you. As we see here at the start of verse 3. We've got the Lord Jesus before us.

So consider Him who endured for you. Consider Him who endured the despising of men who was rejected, despised and rejected.

[6 : 36] The man of sorrows. The man who is acquainted with grief. Think of the Lord Jesus. How He endured that living among sinners even though He knew no sin in Himself. And He endured the miseries of this life.

The depravations. Even the sinless weaknesses of hunger and thirst. And He endured the temptations of the devil. Then ultimately, of course, when He endured the cross.

When He endured the shame. The dereliction of His Father. Remember, Jesus endured. He endured on the cross. And He bore the sins of His people and Himself.

Now, because nobody, I'm certainly not going to diminish the sufferings of any one of God's people in that endurance in their intensity. Of course not. But remember that when you endure for Him, remember what He endured for you.

That's what the author of Hebrews is telling us here in verse 4. You've not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Now, of course, Jesus did that. When He was on the cross, He shed His blood on the cross.

[7 : 47] So in your endurance for the Savior, remember you've not faced, never will face what Jesus faced, you who are His. You've not endured as Jesus endured.

So as the author tells us here, you're not to be downcast. You're not to be weary and dejected and discouraged because what you're enduring is for a purpose, for your growth as a Christian.

It's for your spiritual well-being. So, you and I, we've got to face the reality that the Christian life isn't a walk in the park. It's not an easy way out.

It's not, you know, the promise, the side of eternity of a troubled, pain-free life. The Christian life isn't meant to be easy. You know, anyone who tells you that Christian life, that becoming a Christian means that somehow you're going to sail through life, sail into heaven without so much as a care in the world is speaking unscriptural nonsense.

Christian life easy. You tell that to Nabil Qureshi, the man who entered glory last week, the Muslim defender of Islam, the man who was converted and became a Christian, a solid Christian witness, his decision to follow Jesus, broke his family, broke his Muslim family, so much so that he could write that to this day my family is broken by the decision I made and it's excruciating every time I see the cost I had to pay.

[9 : 19] So you say, the Christian life is easy. You tell that to persecuted believers in prison in the Middle East and in North Korea. Those brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering torture of body and mind because of their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Christian life easy. You tell that to the senior school pupils in Edinburgh who are being mocked and insulted for their Christian faith by even their own peer group. No, Christian life is not easy.

But that doesn't mean to say that somehow you're going to endure for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Some of you are going to endure all by yourself and all in your own strength.

Absolutely not because God is with you. The Lord Jesus is with you in your endurance and through that endurance. That endurance is building you up to be like Christ.

To be taken from where you are, where you are in your weak faith, in my weak faith, in our selfish hearts and for you to be brought to that place where you're strong, strong in the Lord through having endured to the end.

[10 : 29] Because you see, as we read verse 7, we'll read it again. Verse 7, we're told there that there's a purpose for your endurance and that discipline. The next mark, I feel like, of being a Christian, what it means to be a Christian.

Endurance. Discipline. In fact, have you noticed, very interesting, verse 5 down to verse 11. In each successive verse, discipline is mentioned. Same word.

So that obviously indicates there's something of great importance in the way that God is working, working all things for your good and your maturing as a Christian. Discipline.

You know, whenever you hear of discipline, you know, often anyway, we tend to think of something sort of heavy-handed and stern. You know, the kind of mindset of the totalitarian regime, you know, like the Nazi regime in the 1930s.

Discipline was one of the key elements in that cultural program of wanting to make Germany great through self-sacrificial discipline. discipline. Discipline for the sake of the Reich and the Führer.

[11 : 38] And Hitler's ideal for Hitler youth would be that they were as swift as a greyhound, tough as leather, and as hard as crook steel. So repressive discipline.

That's not the discipline that we read here, that we find here. It's not some kind of harsh, overbearing behaviour that's going to make us into mindless robots to serve an able regime.

Absolutely not. Because the discipline that we see here mentioned in these verses, the discipline that characterises the Christian life, it's the discipline that's seen in the home.

It's the parental discipline that every home surely should practice and bring up our children. Teaching them right and wrong. Teaching them right and wrong according to God's word. Instructing our children in what's correct behaviour.

Training our children to grow in wisdom. And that's what we see in verses 5 to 11. That's what this discipline is about. It's in relation to the family.

[12 : 40] It's a father disciplining his sons. A parent disciplining his children. And so you see here in verse 5 and 6 you notice how it's broken into a poetic form there because this is going back to the book of wisdom.

This is going back to the book of Proverbs. And where these verses were originally written, of course this is King Solomon. He's giving fatherly advice to his son in love.

And then we fast forward to the book of Hebrews here and we're seeing here these same words appropriated by God. It says, God's word of wisdom to his children. You who know him as your heavenly father.

So what do we find here? We find that our heavenly father disciplines his children and he disciplines us in love. It's that training in righteousness.

It's a mark of God's love for you. He's treating you as his son, as child. You know, just stop for a moment and just pause because this is really quite an astonishing statement.

[13 : 42] That almighty God, our creator, saviour, maker of heaven and earth, that he should treat you, that he should treat me as his son, as his child.

This is the gospel. This is the gospel truth that tells of our adoption as sons into the family of God. It is by grace that we're saved. He's saving us from our sins.

He's bringing us into his eternal family so that you and I can call on God as our father, our heavenly father. And let's just, you know, remind ourselves how important it is to dwell on the fatherhood of God.

God, our father. And think of all that that entails in your growth and holiness because our heavenly father, he cares for you. He cares, you know, we were singing in Psalm 103 as a father that shows compassion to his children so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

And that compassion is seen even in his discipline in us for our good. Again, you know, bring to sort of a comparative, not really comparative, but certainly an illustration.

[14 : 54] Think of ordinary human fathers. Some of you have been fathers to sons. Think of when you're disciplined or disciplining your children. Don't do it out of harshness.

Heavy handedness. You do it out of love. Because you're wanting to protect them from harm. You chastise them in a way so that they've obviously done something that's endangered them.

And so you reprimand them in love because you love them. Because you want them to grow to become mature individuals. Because the opposite of a disciplined child, of course, is an ill-disciplined child.

Someone who's unruly. Somebody who wants his own way all the time. Somebody who wants to do his own thing and never matures. Somebody who's spoiled and indulged and grows up without constraint or restraint.

Remember, as a teacher, I could usually always spot a child for whom discipline wasn't given in the home. The child who was overindulged, who was spoiled, who was given whatever he wanted.

[16 : 02] There was no restraint in that child. There was no maturity. There was no respect for those in authority. But the child who knew discipline in his or her home responded to authority.

It was mature and wise and really a pleasure to teach. I'll give you another example that I saw just the other day. It was Friday, Friday lunchtime and I was in a local supermarket and I heard a child crying, crying his eyes out in one of the aisles.

I turned and looked and there was his mother chasing him, just eying him with her voice. It was a voice of authority. She was scolding, I presume, as a three-year-old son. He'd wandered away by himself.

He'd wandered far away from her. And she was telling him in no uncertain terms that he'd done wrong. All the time she was doing this, her arms were around him. Her arms were around him.

She was chasing him for his own good and she was doing it in love. This was apparent to her child that that child had been so prone to wander and become lost. And I just thought at the time, isn't this such a timely illustration of the Lord's discipline to his own children?

[17 : 12] what the Lord does for us and is chastening us. You know, when we wander from him and he chastens us to keep us from our own folly and our own selfish wanderings, our desires to do our own thing.

You know, when we wander so far from his presence and he brings us back to himself and he does it through his disciplining us and all the time his arms wrapped around us and telling you, telling you I love you.

What I'm doing for you is in love and for your own good, for your eternal good. And that's what we're seeing here in this passage, this parent-child, this even more particular, this father-son analogy that tells us of God disciplining his children.

A human parent, a human father doesn't discipline his child without a constructive reason to do that. And so, you know, our heavenly father, he disciplines you, he disciplines me for constructive reasons, for the sake of our growth as Christians.

May well be that he's disciplining me, disciplining you to keep you from something that's going to seriously damage you. It may be that we lean in him the more in our faith and our trust and even doing that through the valley of tears.

[18 : 30] Well, whatever the reason for God's disciplining us, remember, as we're told here, that the purpose of your enduring as a Christian is for discipline, for your training in righteousness, so that the more you'll become like Christ and that you'll follow his ways, that you'll grow, grow in holiness.

And as you respond to his chastening love, you'll respect that love. You'll respect that love with thankfulness. That's what the psalm writer of Psalm 119 wrote.

He could testify to God's purposes for him and God's disciplining him. Psalm 119, verse 67, before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. Same Psalm, verse 71, it's good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

Verse 75, I know, Lord, that your rules are righteous and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. And God is there training you for glory.

He'll permit you to endure through discipline to transform you, to change you into that family likeness of the Lord Jesus. Even if you were to go back to chapter 5, verse 8 of this book, you'll see Jesus.

[19 : 47] Jesus who learned obedience where he suffered. Remember even in Gethsemane when he cried out, Father, if it were possible take this cup from me. And then in the suffering of his soul, crying that out.

But then is that peace, that assurance, not my will, but your will be done. I know that many of you are going through the afflictions of the Lord's disciplining.

That you're enduring much as a Christian. And your faith has been tested. And your trust in the Lord has been tested. You're going through the deep waters and deep valleys.

And sometimes it seems very, very difficult to understand God's sovereign purposes and what you're enduring. But God's work instructs us to remain strong in him because he knows he is sovereign because he cares.

As William Cowper wrote in his hymn, his purposes will ripen fast and folding every hour the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower because God is your heavenly father.

[20 : 59] You know, if on earth we respect our parents, our earthly parents, our earthly fathers, these are their loving discipline that they gave for us, for our good, how much more should we respect, love, our heavenly father, our spiritual father, who is referred to us, the father of spirits, how much more should we love and respect our heavenly father for his disciplining us for our good, for your eternal good, endurance, discipline, and then holiness, particularly verses 9 to 11.

With the endurance that you're undertaking, the discipline that you've been given by God, it's absolutely consistent, absolutely necessary because we're told here in verse 9 to 11 for a purpose, to make you holy.

Verse 9 tells us to bring life. It's this great purpose for holiness that we may share, as we see there in verse 9, that we may share his holiness.

Verse 10, sorry. You know, just pause for a moment and reflect what's been said here. Yes, God cares for you. He cares for every aspect of your life, every detail of your life.

Remember, He cares for your holiness. He cares that you're fit for heaven. He cares for your spiritual well-being. You who've been made right with God by His grace, you've been saved through faith in the Lord Jesus.

[22 : 33] God cares for you. He cares for your growth and holiness. He cares that you put to death the lusts and the sinful affections that have led you away from Him. He cares that you're cleansed and renewed in Him each and every day.

He cares that you know that His chastenings, His disciplines are always for your good, that you're being built up in holiness.

You know, it's no coincidence that we're led here to this passage today. You know, as I said earlier, we're looking at the whole subject of holiness in our midweek meetings. Of course, it should be a constant subject for us to focus on, to grasp, and to do so each day.

And I do firmly believe that God in His wisdom has moved one of our great Christian thinkers and preachers and writers to write that particular book on holiness that we've been using, obviously based in Scripture, the book that St.

Laferdison's devoted to God. I encourage you, if you haven't yet done so to get that book, that book, as we said, based, firmly, firmly based on the book of books, the Bible.

[23 : 46] Because you see, holiness is so crucial to a Christian in a Christian's life. As we've emphasized already, verse 14, without holiness, no one will see God.

And you say, how does that figure? Well, without holiness, without Christ's likeness, none of us could stand in the presence of God, none of us could stand.

He'd be destroyed in his presence without holiness. But God is working a good work in all you who are his. And that good work will involve the many trials and the testings and the discipline as you endure so much for his glory and your eternal good.

Remember God's purpose. keep remembering that purpose for you and your sanctification that it's for your holiness. It's for you to appear before him spotless, without blemish, before a holy God who can't behold in equity.

You who have suffered and will suffer much in the work of the kingdom, remember it's a suffering to mold you, to cleanse you, to eradicate the impurities of sin.

[25 : 02] Remember his ways with you are perfect. He's given you that endurance that you need. He's not going to let you suffer more than you can endure. He'll strengthen you in your weakness.

He'll give you endurance. He's training you in discipline. He's creating holiness in you. You've got to exercise that responsibility to endure and to be willing to be disciplined and to strive for holiness.

I'm just going to say something in closing because this passage should give each and every one of God's children actually an enormous encouragement because the strenuous endurance that you're going through has that divine purpose because it's revealing to you that he's your father-in-law and for you to continue to trust in your heavenly father and remember that that painful discipline reaps a harvest, a harvest of righteous blessing for your soul.

It's for your growth in holiness. Why? Because God is good. So don't be discouraged. Don't be downcast when he's disciplining you because he's a God of love.

The father loves his child. So our father has compassion in each one who are his. He's loved you with that everlasting love. Don't forget that. What if you're not a Christian?

[26 : 33] We've been talking the last, I don't know, half hour or so about suffering, about pain, about discipline. Is that all putting to you? Is the thought of the Christian life being tough and hard and not easy?

Is that making you somehow think, I couldn't be a Christian? Well, just remember this. Remember the Lord Jesus, the divine son of God. He faced an endurance in his obedience.

He endured all that he was willing to face for the sake of sinners such as me and such as you. He was willing to learn obedience through suffering. Suffering for sinners such as you, such as me.

He did what he did so that you might be holy, so that you might be presented before God as righteous. How can you reject such great salvation?

How can you reject the one who came to earth for you so that you might know him, so that you might know the joy of salvation in knowing the Lord Jesus as Savior?

[27 : 39] Now, plead, come to him now. Come, give your life to him and you'll know that blessing that's his. Yes, the blessing of knowing God the Father. Knowing God the Father as your heavenly Father.

the blessing of being sanctified by the Spirit to grow in holiness. The blessing of knowing the Lord Jesus as your Savior. And don't let this opportunity pass. You come to him.

You submit your life to him. And you'll know that peace, the peace of God that passes all understanding. Amen.

Let us come together in prayer. Let us pray. Our heavenly Father, we give thanks to you. for your coming with us, coming before us, coming alongside us, being with us, Lord, even through the deep valleys, even through the tears.

We thank you, Lord, that you never leave us, you never forsake us. You're with us even to the very end of the age. So, Lord, truly we pray that we will acknowledge your goodness to us.

[28 : 46] You're encouraging us even through your word that promises eternal life for all who are his. That promises that bliss of glory, even in the new heaven and the new earth.

We thank you, Lord, that every tear will be wiped away, even in that great eternity. we will see the Lord Jesus face to face.

Continue with us, now, Lord, we pray. Forgive anything said amiss from this pulpit. Forgive our wandering thoughts. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Let's close in Psalm 24, page 28.

Just the first three stanzas, the first three singing verses, down to verse 6. The tune is Praetorius. The world and all in it are gods, all peoples of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath.

[29 : 49] Who may ascend the hill of God or in his temple stand? And the answer, the one who shuns false gods and lies, who's pure in heart and hand, he will find favor from the Lord and from his Savior, grace.

Thus are they blessed, O Jacob's God, who truly seek your face. These verses to God's praise. The world and all in it is the world and all in it are gods, all people of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the sea beneath.

Who may ascend the hill of For in his temple stand The one who just falls to the light
Who's pure in heart and time He will find favor from the Lord And from his Savior's grace
The Father's grace, O Jacob's God Who truly seeks your faith And now may grace, mercy
and peace from God Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you

Both now and forevermore Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen
Thank you.