

David

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Preacher: Rev. Chris Ley

- [0 : 0 0] Joshua read that we should run with endurance, the race that's set before us. Our world has lost the virtue of endurance.
- But if we are to be followers of Jesus, we need to get it back. We are called to run, not to walk, with endurance. We live in an obsessively instant society.
- Everything must be instant or it's irrelevant. Instant gratification. Same day delivery. Fast food. Rapid tests.
- 5G. When my wife and I got married, a woman gave us a gift. We didn't ask for it. She said, I've been married 50 years and this is the secret. And the gift was a slow cooker.
- We don't use slow cookers anymore. We use instant pots. We're chronically hurried through all of life. We've been groomed to be impatient.
- [1 : 0 9] If something isn't instant, we're not interested. Now this obsession with instant gratification and the loss of endurance has crept into churches as well.
- Many churches have dumbled down the gospel to be a simple sales pitch. Believe in Jesus, get to heaven. Say this prayer and here's your ticket to eternal life.
- There's no mention in this simple instant gospel for the command to run with endurance. So we need to revive this central truth of our faith.
- And we need to equip one another to run with endurance. Because following Jesus requires endurance. As Jim Packer used to say, we need to keep on keeping on.
- Because there's no shortcuts. Don't look for shortcuts in the life of faith. Keep on the path. Keep on the narrow way.
- [2 : 1 2] Stay in Christ. Abide in him. Remain in him. Or else you can do nothing. And you'll lose your way. No one comes to the Father, Jesus says, except through me.
- There are no shortcuts. So what's needed for us is endurance. I want to ask two questions from our text this morning.
- Firstly, why do we need endurance in the Christian life? And secondly, how do we develop endurance? Why do we need endurance? How do we get it? One, why do we need endurance?
- This is a painting that's above my desk by a former regent student named Claire McKenzie. And it depicts the parable of the four soils. Jesus in Matthew 13 tells a parable about the gospel going out into the world.
- Like a farmer who's throwing seed. And the majority of the seed, 75%, immediately germinates and plants pop up. It's the beginnings of this fantastic harvest.
- [3 : 1 6] Any church, our church, would be thrilled with this kind of success rate. Can you imagine if we shared the gospel and 75% of people received it? However, Jesus warns that of those new seedlings, most of them will wither and die.
- Because the substrate, the soil they live upon, is inadequate to support their growth. Only 25% of the seed will survive. 75% will fail to endure.

Just think about that. Jesus seems to be saying that most people who hear the gospel will likely respond positively to it. And of course they will. It's good news.

It's a message about how much God loves you. And the lengths to which he's gone to save you. It's a gospel about God's grace. About his mercy, his generosity, his love. It's a gospel that elevates every person as beloved to the Father.

He intentionally made you in his image. It's incomprehensible how precious you are to him. To him, your life was worth the life of his only son.

[4 : 28] So 75% of people hear the gospel in Jesus' parable. But for many, maybe most, the sin which clings so closely stops them from moving forward.

The immediate worries of life choke their faith. It's a parable about endurance. It's a parable about the absolute necessity of good soil to nourish us through life.

Because what we need in this journey of following Jesus is endurance. We need deep roots. We need good soil. We need rich nutrients.

We need to understand the gospel properly. Because this path it calls us to walk on is long and it is hard. In Canada, only a third of children who are raised going to church will continue to attend by the age of 17.

It's strikingly similar proportions to the enduring plants in Jesus' parable. Just think about these beautiful children behind me. Mine included.

[5 : 43] And the desperate need they have for good soil. For proper understanding of God and of themselves and of the sin which clings so closely.

They must be taught the importance of endurance and how to endure in Christ. Because statistically, only one third will. Let's make sure the gospel planted in our children falls on good soil.

Let's ensure they understand who Jesus is and why we should give our lives to follow him. In Hebrews 12, we're called upon to see life as a race.

And we're commanded to run with endurance. Because most people who hear the gospel struggle to endure. That's why endurance in faith is so important. Because sin clings closely to all of us at every step of our journey.

So that's why we need to endure. Secondly, finally, how do I develop endurance? Hebrews 11 equates endurance with one thing.

[6 : 50] Faith. In verse 32, it lists six heroes in the Old Testament. Listen to this. Gideon. Gideon. Barak. Samson. Jephthah. David. Samuel.

And then all the prophets. Who through faith conquered kingdoms. Enforced justice. Obtained promises. Stopped the mouths of lions.

Quenched the power of fire. Escaped the edge of the sword. Were made strong out of weakness. Became mighty in war. Put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection.

This is an incredible list of triumphs. All achieved through faith in God. To deliver and to save. But now the text pivots instantly.

Because not every faithful person will experience triumph through their life. Look at how verse 35 immediately continues. Some were tortured.

[7 : 49] Refusing to accept release. So that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned.

They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats. Destitute. Afflicted. Mistreated. People of whom the world was not worthy.

And yet wandering about in deserts and mountains. And in dens and caves of the earth. Yet this incredible list of triumphs through faith. And then it's followed immediately by an incredible list of suffering.

And persecution. Endured by people of faith. But how? How did these people endure these unspeakable sufferings?

Look at verse 39. All of these are commended through their faith. It was faith. Faith that God ultimately would deliver them.

[8 : 49] Faith that he was with them when they walked through the greenest pastures and the clearest waters. As well as through the valley of the shadow of death. And the fruit of faith is endurance.

Faith in God births endurance. We've heard over the past month about heroes of faith. Abraham and Sarah. Moses and the Israelites. Joshua and Rahab.

King David. All of them endured by faith. And since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. Of martyrs.

Of faithful yet flawed people of God. Let us now run with endurance. The race that is set before us. Your race may lead to unimaginable triumphs.

And miracles of salvation. Your race may lead to unthinkable suffering. And persecution. But through it all.

[9 : 46] Run with endurance. The race that is set before you. And here's how. In chapter 12. Verse 2. Looking only to Jesus.

God the Son. The King of Heaven. Come to earth to establish His reign. Look only to Jesus. The author and perfecter.

The founder and the finisher of our faith. Look to Jesus. For He and only He. Is the narrow gate. That we must pass through to enter eternal life.

He's the only way to the Father. He's the truth. In a world of deception and lies. He's the life. The vine.

The very tree of life. That all of us are invited to be grafted into. That we might endure. Look only to Jesus. The beginning and the end of our journey.

[10 : 43] Who walks with us by His Holy Spirit. Through every step of our path. Look to Jesus. 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. We are to consider Him. Who endured from sinners. Such hostility against Himself.

So that you may not grow weary. Or faint hearted. God the Son. The King of the Kingdom of Heaven. Came to earth to hang on a cross.

To die the death that you and I deserve. That we may be saved from death. That in Him a way may be laid. That will lead us to the Father.

To life. To joy. To glory. Consider Him. For Him there were no shortcuts. He endured the cross.

[11 : 43] Because that is what was required. Consider Jesus. Abide in Him. And by faith. You will run with endurance.

This series ends with an invitation for all of us to set our eyes on Jesus. To consider Him. To trust in the Lord with all your heart.

To see that He is the only way to God. Next week we start the Gospel of Mark. We are going to gaze at Jesus together. We are going to consider Him together.

And I really hope all of you come along with us for this journey. There are no shortcuts to the celestial city. To the kingdom of God where Jesus reigns in joy and glory on the throne of heaven.

Where death is dead. And love has won. Because Christ has conquered. What is required is for us to run with endurance.

[12 : 42] And endurance comes through faith in Christ. So we must consider Him. And as you do, may His gospel be planted on good soil in you.

Amen.