



**Enduring Through Trouble
Various Scriptures
GCSP – 05/09/2009**

In 1980, a group of no-name college hockey players were assembled to represent the United States in the Winter Olympics. Professional players from the NHL were not allowed to play in the Olympics at that time even though most of the European teams consisted of older players who could easily be considered as professionals. Some had been playing together for 10-15 years.

The team from the Soviet Union was considered to be the best hockey team in the world. They played against the NHL All-Star team and defeated them easily. The Soviet team had been undefeated in international play for a decade or more and seemed to be invincible. The team assembled for the United States was not even the best college hockey players, and most had never played as teammates before.

Coach Brooks made one specific determination from the start: His team would be the best conditioned team in the Olympics. They didn't have the best talent but they would not be the first team to get tired when the games reached the end.

Among many other factors, the conditioning of the U.S. team carried them to unexpected victory after unexpected victory. They met the Soviet team in the semi-final round and endured to the end to secure probably the biggest upset in team sports history. They then defeated another European team (I don't remember who) to win the Gold Medal. It was tabbed as a miracle performance and was later made into a movie by the name "Miracle."

In most of the hockey games during the Olympics, the U.S. fell behind early but took advantage late in the games when the other team started getting weary. Their superior conditioning allowed them to be fresh and strong when others were ready to hit the showers. If you had to pick one thing that allowed them to win the Gold you could do worse than to say it was their conditioning, their endurance, and their refusal to give up.

Time and time again, God's Word admonishes Christians to endure to the end. We are told to be strong, to stand firm, to overcome, to be the victor, to finish the course of our lives, and to endure to the end. And just like that rag-tag group of college hockey players, we must prepare and we must condition ourselves if we expect to be able to endure to the end.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **2 Timothy**.

2 Timothy 2:7-14

Let's pray.

Many of us in this room this evening are struggling in one way or another. Some of you may be on the receiving end of spiritual attacks, some may just be getting beat down by the struggles of life, and some could be experiencing a time of testing to strengthen your trust and faith in God. Whatever your situation is you are called upon to endure to

the end. You are admonished to endure to the end. You are encouraged to endure to the end. And quite honestly, you are expected to endure to the end.

The Apostle Paul started the Church at Ephesus on one of his missionary journeys. When he left the church, it was flourishing and in good hands. At some point though, false teachers began to creep in and tear the church apart. Paul returned and put young Timothy in charge as the pastor. This was a tall order for even a seasoned and much older Christian leader because of the many problems the church was embroiled in, so Paul's choice of Timothy is testament to his maturity in Christ and in God's Word because he was much too young by the standards of the day. Timothy's first order of business was to dismiss the current leadership and even to remove two of them from the church completely.

v. 7

If you examine the two letters Paul wrote to Timothy you will find dozens of other issues in the church and in Timothy's personal life that were difficult at the very least to endure. So when Paul opens our passage with the words, "**Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything**", we must know that this encouraging word comes at a time when Timothy is probably questioning everything. He is weary from the personal battles with others in the church, he is suffering from some stomach problems, he is being tempted, his youthfulness is an issue for some who are not respecting his authority, he is dealing with rampant gossip and quarrels, he is opposed at every turn, etc., and he is entertaining thoughts of resigning his position at the church and even the ministry as a whole to just move on with his life.

Obviously none of you have been the pastor of a church, but how many of you have "been there" as far as Timothy's state of mind?

It's easy to get discouraged in this life. It's easy to entertain thoughts of giving it all up and running away. The grass is always greener somewhere. The weather is always better somewhere else. Life would be easier if only...

We had better stop there because Jesus said, "**These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world**" (**John 16:33**).

Let me ask you a question; did Jesus say we might have tribulation in this world or that we will have tribulation? There is no might or maybe about it; Christians will experience trials, tribulation, and tough times. Peter echoes the Lord when he says, "**For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**" (**1 Peter 2:21**).

Look over at **2 Timothy 3:12** to see how Paul echoes the Lord in this same letter to Timothy. We have that word "**all**" again in this verse, meaning every single person who desires to live a godly life will suffer persecution – no exceptions. The only way out is to choose to not live a godly life, but the Bible also tells us that apart from a godly life there is no evidence that you are genuinely saved. And if you are saved but are choosing to not live a godly life you will suffer the chastisement of God.

So the bottom line is if you are a Christian you are going to have periods of suffering in your life; the suffering of persecution for which you will eventually be rewarded for, or the suffering of being punished for your disobedience which there is no reward.

v. 8-10

Timothy is probably expecting a sympathetic shoulder from Paul but instead he gets the added burden of possibly ending up like Paul; in prison and facing execution.

Hold your place in **2 Timothy** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Jeremiah**.

Jeremiah 12:1-5

Jeremiah was most likely the most hated, persecuted, and abused prophet of God recorded in the Bible. The people from his own home town warned him to shut up or they would seek to kill him. Nobody wanted to hear the prophecies God gave him to proclaim. There is no record of anyone turning from their sin and repenting during his ministry.

In the midst of all of this Jeremiah cries out to God wanting to know why his life and ministry are so miserable while the wicked seem to prosper and go unpunished all around him. Jeremiah was also looking for a shoulder to cry on just like Timothy. God's response to Jeremiah is basically, you ain't seen nothing yet. The illustration is comparing Jeremiah's current troubles with running against men and living in peaceful surroundings, against running against horses and living in elements of a jungle-like environment with all the wild animals that go with it.

According to the examples of Timothy and Jeremiah, although all of our trials are only temporary they could at times get worse before they get better.

Let's go back to **2 Timothy**.

Let's quickly take a look at two other statements Paul makes. First he says, "**The Word of God is not imprisoned.**" The best way to interpret and apply what Paul is attempting to get across to young Timothy is that the message of God's Word can and will flourish in our lives during difficult times if we keep our eyes on Jesus. Just because you are in peril doesn't mean your witness and testimony should be or will be. The Word of God will become even more real and relevant to your life when you go through tough times. There is no better comfort than the Word of God. There is no greater source of strength and hope and wisdom and discernment than God's Word. "**The Word of God is not imprisoned.**"

The other statement from Paul is: "**I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen.**" Paul is willing to endure to the end for the sake of the privilege God gives each of us to witness to the lost and see them become followers of Jesus.

I am not going to get into a discussion about election and predestination for the obvious reason that we would be here until next week, but the fact of the matter is, Scripture is clear that God has chosen His elect from the foundation of the world. But somehow this does not alleviate us from our responsibility to preach the gospel to everyone. And somehow in the divine plan and purpose of God He chooses to accomplish the salvation

of His elect through us. He has given us the privilege to participate in seeing souls who were once in darkness come to the light of the gospel message and join us as followers of Jesus Christ.

v. 11-13

We have every reason to endure through our troubles. This life is only temporary and we have seen on multiple occasions recently that Scripture calls us to crucify our flesh and ungodly desires and passions; we are to live as if we are dead to sin because of the life we have in Christ. We have an eternal future of ruling and reigning alongside of our Lord – if we endure.

On the other hand if we do not endure through our troubles we are proving that we do not belong to the Lord. If our faith proves to be non-existent we will find ourselves among those of whom the Lord says, **“Depart from me, I never knew you.”**

v. 14

There is a great point of application for us in this verse; we must not be engaged in trying to talk our way out of our problems, meaning we should not be trying to figure things out on our own. It quite possible could mean we should not even be trying to get out of the trial but should patiently endure to the end so that God can accomplish His perfect work in our lives through the trial. Paul says, when it comes to dealing with trials our words are useless and they lead to our ruin and the ruin of those who hear us.

All the planning and scheming and calculating and talking in an attempt to extract ourselves from a trial are more harmful to us than good for us. This does not mean we simply throw up our hands and do nothing. We must search the Scriptures to find out if we are deficient in our obedience to God’s Word, we must seek wise and godly counsel, and we must most importantly bring everything to the Lord. The point is that we must not allow the trial and the mad scramble to get out of it, consume us. We are called to endure troubles and trials.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **James**.

James 1:2-4

Do you see the danger of trying to avoid and/or quickly extract yourself from trials? The Bible says you will not become a mature Christian apart from trials and troubles. There is no short cut to becoming a mature Christian – you simply will not get there without enduring through troubles and trials. This is why we are to consider it all joy when they come into our lives instead of flapping our lips complaining and trying to figure things out.

We read a verse last night at Praise & Prayer from the **Proverbs 18:21**; it says, **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”** God is telling us that our words are extremely powerful. Last night we used it in the context of speaking life to our lost friends and loved ones. We prayed and spoke life to the specific names that are on our hearts and minds for salvation.

This verse also applies to what Paul is warning us about. When we find ourselves in the midst of a trial we will often speak of all the horrible things that could happen to us.

When finances are tight we wrangle with words like, "What if we lose the house?" or "What's going to happen when we run out of food?" or even worse. Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Joel 3:10 says, "**Let the weak say I am strong.**" Have you ever heard a more ridiculous statement from a human viewpoint? Why would the weak say they are strong, and what good would it do? Death and life are in the power of the tongue. The Bible teaches us to live by faith and faith is believing what you cannot presently see. So speaking what is not as if it is, is an act of faith.

Now let me give you some additional hope if you are discouraged at the prospect of living a life of troubles and trials.

I want you to find two passages, so after you find one hold your place there and find the other one. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew** and the Book of **Lamentations**.

Matthew 6:34 and **Lamentations 3:22-23**

Matthew 6:34

First, Jesus tells us to stop worrying about tomorrow. Stop trying to figure out all the details and all the solutions to tomorrow's problems. Each day has enough problems. Each day has its fill already. Deal with what's on your plate for today and leave tomorrow for tomorrow. Stop worrying. Stop allowing your mind to be consumed by the things that are on the horizon. Stop allowing Satan to steal your joy and your peace.

Jesus says in **John 10:10**, "**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**" And when you allow yourself to focus on tomorrow's problems before tomorrow is even here you are allowing the thief to steal your joy and your peace; you are allowing the thief to kill your hope; you are allowing the thief to destroy your future. And you are not allowing the Lord the opportunity to turn your lack into abundance.

Lamentations 3:22-23

When do the Lord's lovingkindnesses cease? – NEVER! When do His compassions fail? – NEVER! And when are the Lord's lovingkindness and compassion given to us? – EVERY MORNING! They are new every morning because the Lord's faithfulness is great! Remember how **2 Timothy 2:13** said that even when we are faithless He is faithful? You don't have to concern yourself about whether or not His lovingkindness and compassion will be there when you wake up the next morning. Even if you are the sort who struggles with control issues you can count on the Lord fulfilling His promises. He will not fail you. He'll never leave you nor forsake you.

Do you see why we should not be worried about tomorrow's trouble? We should not be worried because the Lord will supply enough lovingkindness and enough compassion every morning to last through today. He will always give us everything we need to get through the trials and troubles of today. The tomorrow morning He will give us enough for tomorrow's problems.

His mercies are kind of like manna; there will always be enough for today and you have to wait until tomorrow comes before you gather up the mercies you will need for tomorrow.

James says, “**You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow**” (**James 4:14a**). The truth of the matter is you don’t – so why waste your time, why forfeit your joy and peace, and why shipwreck your faith over something you have no control over and you do not know about?

How foolish would you feel if you were sick with worry about tomorrow and the Lord raptured all of us to heaven tonight? What a waste of time that would have been.

Beloved, I know this is not easy, especially when you are smack dab in the middle of a trial. I know the sin of worry is difficult to overcome – and make no bones about it, worry is a sin because Jesus commands us not to worry in **Matthew 6:25; 31; and 34**. But the Bible tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**). So worrying about tomorrow is sin and you have no possible chance to please God while you are worrying.

Let’s close tonight by looking at the whole section of Scripture in **Matthew 6**.

Matthew 6:25-34

Besides being a sin, the bottom line about worry is this – what does it accomplish? Have you ever worried all day about your finances and found that your worry added an extra thousand to your bank account as a result? Have you ever worried about your health and found that your worry cured your disease? Have you ever worried about your children or grandchildren and found that your worry protected them?

What has worry ever done for you except make you miserable both physically and emotionally? Then why do you do so much for worry? Why do you feed it and care for it and nurture it?

Worry is a sin; and sin must be confessed and repented of if you desire to be released from its power over your life. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. So when you confess and repent you are speaking life to your soul and your mind and your spirit.

Let’s pray.