

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”

In Hebrews 12:1-2 we read:

Hebrews 12:1-2

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

And also in Hebrews 10:36-39:

„For **you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise**: “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

Many consider that the promise of God was instantaneously, once and for all, achieved at the moment they first believed. This moment is everything for them! But my dear brother and sister, the Christian life is not an achievement of the moment, something that somebody does in the corner of a room and then he can go on living as he pleases, “because grace covers everything”. Instead, the Christian life is a race. A race that lasts all our life! And to run this race there is just one way: it is called endurance! We will not receive the promise but only at the end of the race, not before! We first have to run it with endurance; to endure to the end; to stay in the faith till our last

breath! And then we will receive the promise. Then comes the crown of righteousness. Not before! As Paul said:

2 Timothy 4:6-8

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** **Finally**, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

First comes the finishing of the race and the keeping of the faith, then comes the crown of righteousness. We have to run the race in order to be crown. People who did not endure, those that left the faith because of persecution, cares and the love of this world (see the parable of the sower) will not be crowned. We have to persevere! Our faith will be tested through trials and tribulations, and we need patience to hold up. In Romans 2:6-7 Paul says, speaking of God:

Romans 2:6-7

“who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by **patient continuance** in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;”

Eternal life is the gift! Not to everybody, but to those who patiently endured. Who did not give up under the burden of temptations and afflictions but continued doing good.

But how is endurance produced? The answer is through the tribulations. The tribulations test our endurance but at the same time make it also stronger. That’s why God allows them. In Romans 5:3-5 we read:

Romans 5:3-5

“And not only that, but **we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance**; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

James says the same:

James 1:2-4

“My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience**. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Tribulation produces patience and patience is working to our perfection and completion. Therefore, perfection and completion is not something to which we arrive automatically. They are the product of patience, which in turn is the product of tribulation. That’s why God allows tribulation. That’s why James says to count it all joy when we fall into various trials! So many people speak about “blessings” but they mean simply health and wealth! The precious gospel of Jesus Christ, where to suffer for Jesus has a top place, has been faked through the caricature of the health and wealth gospel! Well my friends, I have to tell you this: God is not here to make our life easy! Life with God will not necessarily be easy – how could we expect such a thing when the Lord says that whoever follows him will be persecuted! – but will be eternal, eternal life with Him! And for this aim to be reached, patience is absolutely necessary, and tribulation is what brings it! Therefore if we fall into various trials, we should count it all joy! Patience will result out of it!

Does Jesus appreciate our patience? Absolutely yes! He looks for it and he praises it! See in Revelation some of his comments:

Revelation 2:1-3

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: “I know your works, your labor, **your patience**, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; **“and you have persevered and have patience**, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”

Revelation 2:18-19

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: I know your works, love, service, faith, and your **patience**; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.”

Revelation 3:10

“Because you have kept **my command to persevere**, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

Persevering is a command of Jesus which we need to keep. We have to persevere to receive the crown. We have to endure and with endurance run the race set before us. Trials and temptations, is part of the Christian life, in fact they are those parts which produce perseverance!

To conclude: the Christian life is not a walk in green gardens whose aim is to collect “blessings”. This is not the gospel! It is the travesty of the health and wealth gospel! Let us not get deceived by it. Instead we should expect trouble in this world. But let’s trust in the Lord! He overcame the world:

John 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

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