

PRESS ON

(WHEN YOU HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE)



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PRESS ON!

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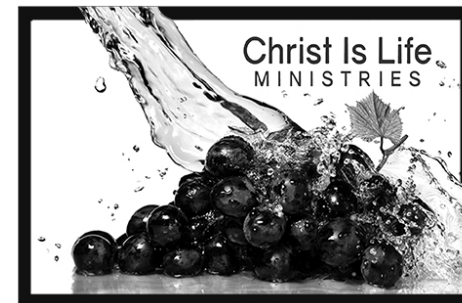
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CHAPTER ONE

HUMAN VERSUS SPIRITUAL ENDURANCE

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I **PRESS ON** to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” Philippians 3:12*

Introduction

I don't know about you, but I wish living the Christian life (especially the transformation process) was a 100-yard dash rather than a life-long marathon. However, if you have been living from Christ as your Source for very long, then I hope you have come to realize that it truly is a marathon and not a sprint.

I see many Christians who have had revelation of Christ as Life start out well but at some point in their journey, choose to no longer continue to walk by faith. Because of this, I believe “endurance” is a key word in living the Christ-centered life. As a result, I felt led to write about spiritual endurance, the obstacles to it, and the results of endurance if we continue to walk by faith. Let’s begin by talking about human endurance versus spiritual endurance.

Human Versus Spiritual Endurance

HUMAN Endurance

Webster’s Dictionary defines “endurance” as “the power to withstand pain or hardships; the ability or strength to continue despite fatigue, stress, or other adverse conditions.” In this definition, the power, ability and strength is human. This is what I call “human” endurance because you, in your own strength, willpower,

and ability, are the source to produce whatever endurance you can muster.

RELIGIOUS Endurance

I define “religious” endurance as when Christians, acting as their own source, are asking God to **help** them to try and endure in their own strength, willpower and ability.

CHRIST-CENTERED Endurance

In discussing “Christ-centered endurance,” I first want to give you Strong’s Concordance definition of endurance: “steadfast waiting for and a patient enduring, sustaining, and persevering.” The key difference between “spiritual” and “human” endurance is that the source of human endurance is self while the Source of spiritual endurance is Christ. I will explain this further in the next chapter. In addition to Strong’s Concordance definition, I would like to give you a practical definition of endurance.

ENDURANCE

The WILLINGNESS to take the NEXT step of faith IN SPITE OF your impossibilities, your struggles, your suffering, your adversities, your hurting or broken relationships, your doubts, your unbelief, your fears, your defeats, your failures and anything else that tempts you to give up on God.

The key word in this definition is “willingness.” Willingness denotes a choice. The choice is whether or not to take the next step of faith. If I am walking in Christ’s endurance in the moment, then I am taking the next step

of faith. However, I can choose in the next moment not to walk in Christ’s endurance.

THE ENEMIES TO ENDURANCE

Introduction

I believe many Christians are deceived that there really isn't a battle going on in their souls. When circumstances are seemingly good or life seems to be manageable then we can stick our head in the sand and not believe there is a non-stop battle that is raging within us and in the unseen realm. The first axiom of war is to know your enemy. In the battles that you and I face, we have three enemies: the flesh, the power of sin, and Satan/demons. Therefore, in this lesson we will look in greater depth at these enemies and then we will see how they can impact our lives to stall or derail our walk with Christ.

Enemy #1 – Our Flesh

*“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from **fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**” 1 Peter 2:11*

I believe the greatest enemy to our walking by faith is our flesh. I simply define our flesh this way:

Our flesh can be defined as our SELF-SUFFICIENT and SELF-PRODUCED attitudes and behaviors that we live from to COPE WITH our struggles and problems, and to attempt to LEAD a secure, happy, and fulfilling life independent of God.

I simply define coping as the strategies or schemes of living that we use to try to deal with our struggles, suffering, etc. using our own intellect, self-discipline and willpower independent of God. When it comes to suffering, our flesh has two main strategies: escape or endurance. Since no one likes pain, the primary strategy of the flesh is to find ways of escaping the pain through such things as denial, stuffing the pain, and self-protection. Our escape mechanisms include work, TV, internet, hobbies, pornography, etc. We also try to anesthetize the pain through food, alcohol, drugs, prescription drugs, overeating, etc.

However, when we can't seem to escape them, we need to figure out ways to endure or “tough it out.” That is when our human endurance comes into play. Sometimes if the struggle is not severe we can “manage” our way through the issue. However, for deep seated strongholds or long term circumstantial or relational struggles our human endurance “tanks” will eventually run dry.

If you are a Christian then you have another form of flesh I call “religious” flesh. Religious flesh is what we try to do independent of the life and power of Christ to live the Christian life and to try and produce God's promises in our lives. Religious flesh is similar to our “normal” flesh in that we are using our own intellect, self-discipline and willpower to accomplish what God's truth is calling us to do. Therefore, if we are living in our religious flesh and it comes to struggles or suffering, we will try to endure on our own or ask God to help us to be the source to endure. Since God's design is our dependence on Him, He isn't going to “help” us be self-sufficient and independent from Him.

We will gain a better understanding of how our flesh becomes the enemy of our walk of faith in the next chapter.

Enemy #2 - Satan/Demonic forces

(Note: for the rest of this booklet when I refer to Satan or the enemy, I will be referring to Satan and his demonic forces.)

For the first 30 years of my Christian journey, I don't think Satan and his demons needed to work on me. This is because I did not know Christ as the Source and was for the most part living a self-sufficient Christian life. However, when I learned that Christ is my Life and started walking in those truths then all "hell" broke loose. It was like waking up a sleeping giant. Why? Because the enemy knows God's truth and what it can do to transform our lives. Therefore, he must pull out all the stops to steal, kill and destroy your spiritual momentum.

The problem is that the enemy, early on in our faith walk, is way ahead of us for four reasons:

1. He knows your HISTORY. – The enemy has known you from birth. He knows how your interactions with others (parents, siblings, friends, etc.) have negatively affected you and he uses that history to manipulate you and destroy your walk with Christ.

2. He knows your fleshly tendencies. – Satan is a very good record keeper of your fleshly behaviors. He helped you form many them. As a result, he will tempt you in those areas in order to steal, kill and destroy your walk in Christ.

3. He knows where the WEAKNESSES are in your armor. - We know that once we are saved that we have the full armor of Christ. As our armor, Christ is our wisdom, peace, freedom, victory, strength, etc. However, the enemy is very aware of where the weaknesses are in our armor and will exploit them at every opportunity.

4. He will use any adverse circumstances to TEMPT you to quit walking by faith. – Whether it is a health problem, financial problem, loss of job, etc., Satan will try to use your adversity to his advantage to create doubt and unbelief so that you will give up on God. He is the author of much adversity in this world.

Enemy #3 – People In The Flesh Or People Being Used by Satan

A third enemy is anyone who is living from their flesh or being used by Satan to negatively impact your life. It can be a spouse, child, friend, co-worker, or even those you attend church with. Christians functioning in the flesh can be tools of the enemy to hinder your walk in Christ.

Therefore, these three enemies are great threats to our spiritual momentum. We will see in the next lesson how they create obstacles to our walk in Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

ENDURANCE AND THE SPIRITUAL BATTLEFIELD

Introduction

I recently watched the HBO mini-series about World War II called “The Pacific.” It is a series that focuses on the Marines fighting in the Pacific Islands. As I was watching this series, I saw many parallels to our walk of faith and the obstacles that hinder our willingness to take the next step of faith. Let’s look at a few of those parallels.

1. Those Christians that DON’T GET OFF THE BEACH

In one of the episodes, new Marine recruits were landing on the beaches of Guadalcanal. Since they had never experienced combat before, their fear overcame them and instead of moving inland they stayed on the beach. In one scene, you see the gunnery sergeant yelling at these guys to get off the beach because the Japanese artillery had targeted the beaches. You could see the dilemma in these new recruits’ eyes. On one hand, they wanted to believe the sergeant and keep moving but the fear of moving forward immobilized them with the result that many of these men died having never gotten off the beach.

I compare these guys with Christians who never get off the beach of their Christian life. I want to share a few reasons why many Christians I know are in this category.

a. Not KNOWING Or LIVING FROM Christ As Your Source

“...I am the way, the truth, and **THE LIFE...**” John 14:6

I believe that the greatest obstacle to continuing our walk of faith is not knowing the foundational truth that Christ is our Source. This is because if you have tried to live the Christian life independent of Christ, at some point you will fail to continue walking by faith. Why? Remember in the first lesson we defined three kinds of endurance: human, religious, and Christ-centered. Here is a key truth concerning human and religious endurance:

***If Christ is NOT your SOURCE for endurance,
then you will live from human or religious endurance.
The problem is that YOU are the source for these
types of endurance and they will eventually fail you.***

As a Christian, you may have been told it is up to you to produce the endurance necessary to deal with your hardship and suffering. The truth is that you can only produce so much endurance in and of yourself. When you are the only source of the endurance, you will eventually run out of human endurance. In your own strength, you simply can’t sustain the endurance you need over the long run. My illustration of this is if an Olympic swimmer and I start swimming towards Hawaii, the Olympian will swim further but eventually we both will run out of energy and drown. So it is with human endurance.

In my definition of religious endurance, you, as a Christian, are the source to try and produce the necessary endurance and are asking God to help you endure. So who is the true source? You or Christ? The truth is that Christ, not you, is your only Source according to 1 Corinthians 1:30:

*"He (Christ) is the **source of your life** in Christ Jesus..."
(Parentheses mine)*

This verse is telling us that Christ is the source of life. We can conclude from this verse that He is the source of our endurance. You see, you need a Source eternally greater than yourself to endure all the hardship that living life in this fallen world and in a fallen body produces. You need a a supernatural, Christ-produced endurance that Christ alone can supply. We see this in Philippians 4:19:

*"My God shall supply **all your needs** according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

This verse teaches us that whatever you need in life, including endurance, Christ is going to be the Source and Supply of that need. What do these two verses tell us?

If Christ is your SOURCE and SUPPLY for endurance, then it is not up to you to produce the endurance and God is NOT GOING to help you TRY and produce endurance.

Consequences of Christ not being your Source:

- You will make little or no progress in your Christian life.
- You will never experience the freedom, victory, and transformation that God promises.
- Your human endurance will work for some length of time and then it will fail you.
- You will try harder in your flesh to endure or you will eventually give up.

- Satan will easily deceive you into trying harder or tempt you to doubt God and give **up.

Note: If Christ being your Source for life is a new concept for you, you can learn more about this key truth by looking at or downloading a curriculum from our website called *Living Life From A New Source*. (See: <http://www.christislifeministries.com>)

b. FEAR

Another reason that Christians don't get off the beaches is fear. Even as I began to understand and walk in Christ as my Life and my Source, I was still fearful. Here are some of the things I was fearful of:

- That God won't come through.
- God won't meet my expectations.
- God is going to disappoint.
- There will be pain if I get off the beach and let God work in my life.

Like the Marines stuck on the beach, fear can:

- Immobilize or paralyze you.
- Create doubts about God and his ability to transform you.
- Drive you back to self as the source.

Satan will play on your fears and use them against you to keep you from moving forward in your spiritual journey.

Question: Do you have any fears that are robbing you of your endurance to continue in your faith walk?

c. SIN STRONGHOLDS

Another area where Christians don't get off the beach is our strongholds. I simply define strongholds as recurring false thoughts and false beliefs that keep us in bondage to our fleshly behaviors. I have seen many Christians (myself included) that were so steeped in a sin pattern that they couldn't picture themselves free of it or else they were fearful of what the cost might be to be set free. As a result they got stuck and couldn't move forward in their Christian lives.

For example, there was a man who was so addicted to pornography that he could not possibly see how he could ever live without it. Even when I showed him God's promise of freedom, he chose to walk in his addiction and all the negative fallout from it.

Satan uses our strongholds to whisper in our ears: "You will never be set free. It is hopeless. You will be in bondage the rest of your life." He persuades us it is hopeless for us to be released from our strongholds so we won't seek God for our freedom.

Question: In what ways could your strongholds be robbing you of your endurance?

2. Those that are WOUNDED.

In battle there will always be some who get wounded. The difference is that in the spiritual battle, all Christians are wounded to varying degrees. Living in fallen bodies and in a fallen world means that everyone on some level will be wounded.

Woundedness can come from several factors:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Sexual abuse | Emotional Abuse |
| Physical abuse | Verbal Abuse |
| Father/Mother Abuse | Stepparent Abuse |
| Divorce | Abandonment |
| Early death of parent/sibling/child | |

Past and present woundedness caused by abuse, divorce, rejection, etc. also creates obstacles to our ability to endure. Let's look at three of these obstacles:

a. Woundedness can leave us with feelings that can become STRONGHOLDS.

Woundedness can leave us feeling:

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| Fearful | Anxious | Worried | Resentful |
| Insecure | Inadequate | Unworthy | Rejected |
| Unloved | Anger | Shame | Abandoned |
| Self-Hatred | Guilty | Defective | Hopeless |
| Violated | Neglected | Unwanted | Lonely |
| Inadequate | Unforgiving | Victimized | Self- |
| Condemned | | | |

If these feelings associated with wounding events continue to reoccur and are not dealt with, then they can become sin strongholds. These strongholds can eventually result in our giving up on God and our Christian walk.

b. Woundedness creates pain that causes us to SELF-PROTECT.

If we try to deal with our pain independent of Christ, then we cope with our pain through such things as compartmentalization (trying to lock our pain away in a room in our heart), living in denial, or trying to escape or

anesthetize our pain through such things as alcohol, pornography, TV, drugs, hobbies, or our jobs. All of these coping mechanisms are designed to keep us from feeling the pain resulting in our living in a self-protection mode. Here is a key truth concerning self-protection:

Self-protection is an ILLUSION because you CANNOT protect yourself from pain.

Let me share the following illustration. There was an older pastor who had been wounded by his father who shared with me that his dad is still disappointed with him to this day. When I told him that he needs to be healed of that woundedness, he told me that he had compartmentalized his pain to protect himself from being wounded further. I shared with him that compartmentalization was an illusion because it is like a room with a locked door and four walls that don't exist. We stand in front of the door and try to protect ourselves against more pain but without the walls there really is no protection.

The hindrance of self-protection to our walk of faith is that instead of protecting ourselves from more pain, we stiff-arm the Holy Spirit who wants to heal our wounded heart. Continued self-protection can eventually lead to our walking away from God. Satan will tempt us to continually try and self-protect in order to prevent the Holy Spirit working on our behalf OR healing us?

c. Woundedness results in false beliefs about SELF and false beliefs about GOD

The key truth concerning woundedness is this:

It is NOT the wounding event or the feelings surrounding the event that is the real problem. The REAL problem is the false beliefs about YOURSELF and GOD that come from that wounding event.

Woundedness results in false beliefs about ourselves or about God. For example, a lady that was sexually abused over ten years by her father believed that she was dirty, rejected, and unworthy. These false beliefs about herself kept her in bondage to a point where she never experienced the freedom that Christ offers.

When we look at how we were wounded, we can develop false beliefs about God's love, mercy, and goodness. To make this point, there was a man who lost his wife to cancer and came to believe that God was against him, did not love him and was not good because God took his wife. He eventually turned away from God.

False beliefs about ourselves and God become great obstacles to our walk of faith. If we don't allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds to the truth, then these false beliefs can eventually overwhelm us and cause us to turn away from God. Satan will do anything to keep us in bondage to our false beliefs because he knows what the end results will be.

Question: In what ways are your wounded feelings, self-protection, or false beliefs about God or yourself as a result of your woundedness hindering your spiritual progress?

Note: If you would like to know more about the effects of woundedness and God's truth about healing, I have written a study called *Healing The Wounded Heart*. (See: <http://www.christislifeministries.com>)

3. Those that are SHELL-SHOCKED

Can you imagine these young soldiers coming from a peaceful environment back home in America and suddenly being thrown into the chaos and horrors of war? As I was watching the graphic depiction of death, dismemberment, and chaos on the battlefield, I could easily understand why so many soldiers came back shell-shocked. (Today we call it Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD)

a. PERPLEXED, OVERWHELMED, and FRUSTRATED

In the same way, I see many Christians in the spiritual battle come away feeling perplexed, confused and overwhelmed by events, relationships or unmet expectations. Here are some examples to illustrate:

1. Perplexed / Confused

- About why things are happening or not happening in their lives.
- About why they aren't farther along in their transformation.
- About why God is doing or not doing something.
- About why they can't experience more freedom or victory.

Question: What are you perplexed about in your life or your Christian walk?

2. Overwhelmed

- By internal struggles such as fear, anxiety, and worry.
- By adverse circumstances such as health and financial struggles.
- By struggles in marriage, raising kids, with friends, or with work related issues.

Question: What do you feel overwhelmed by in your life?

3. Frustrated

- Because God is not meeting your expectations.
- Because people are not meeting your expectations.
- Because you are not meeting the expectations you have about yourself.

Questions: What are you feeling concerning unmet expectations by God, people, or self-imposed expectations?

All of these things can possibly lead to doubt and unbelief about God and living the Christian life.

b. EXPECTATIONS about God, others, and our Christian walk.

As I look at my life and my Christian walk and the Christian walk of so many believers I have ministered to, I see one of the greatest stumbling blocks is expectations. Stop and think about the areas where you are experiencing frustration. I think you will be surprised about how much frustration is centered on your expectations of God, others, and your own Christian walk. If expectations is too strong a word, insert the word "desire." Let's look further into these three areas of expectations:

1. Our Expectations Concerning GOD

The more that I look at my Christian life or life in general, I realize that a key obstacle to my walk of faith is my expectations of God. Take a look at your walk for a minute and see if some of the following expectations are true of you:

a. Expectations concerning what God IS doing or IS NOT doing.

When we look at God's promises, we can put expectations on how God is going to accomplish them in our lives. For example, God promises an abundant life. We might expect God to produce that abundant life without pain or suffering. When pain and suffering comes, we can get frustrated or even angry at God. If the anger and frustration are not dealt with, this can lead to you either moving or walking away from a dependent relationship with God.

b. Expectations on God's TIMING.

Another expectation that can create frustration is God's timing. In my case, God has never met any of my timetables. I will admit that it used to cause me great heartburn when I expected God to work faster than He was working. This unmet expectation over time could create a real hindrance to your walk of faith.

2. Expectations concerning our "WHY" questions.

I don't know about you but I have asked God many "why" questions over the years such as: "Why did you allow the abuse to happen in my life?" or "Why is it taking so long to be set free of my inadequacy?" I would ask

questions like these over and over and never get a response. There were many times along the way I wanted to give up because I received no answers. I knew a man that I disciplined who walked away from God because He never answered the question of why his fiancé was killed in a car accident the day before his wedding. Here is a key truth concerning Satan and our expectations towards God.

Satan will use our unmet expectations towards God to cause us to doubt God and His goodness, love, and grace.

Question: Are your unmet expectations about God creating frustration, doubt or even unbelief?

3. Our Expectations Concerning OTHERS

When it comes to relationships, unmet expectations are a key reason why Christians quit walking by faith, especially in marriage. We all have expectations on how we, as spouses, are to be loved, valued, and accepted. When those expectations are not met that can lead to our getting frustrated and even angry.

Concerning other Christians, I have heard people say, "I can't believe he/she did that or said that because he/she is a Christian" or "I think our church leadership should know better than to do that."

Unmet expectations concerning others can create unforgiveness or rejection of others.

Question: Are your unmet expectations about others creating frustration, unforgiveness or even bitterness?

4. Our expectations concerning our CHRISTIAN WALK

For some reason, we, as Christians, have a tendency to measure our spiritual progress. We also believe that, on some level, failure is not an option. I have talked to many Christians who have a “spiritual” tape measure that they pull out from time to time to measure their spiritual progress. When they don’t measure up or their Christian walk is not meeting their expectations, then their tendency is towards frustration and self-condemnation. I hear comments such as “When am I really going to be set free of my _____?” or “Shouldn’t I be further along in my spiritual journey and not keep doing this?”

Do you see how our flesh or Satan can use these unmet expectations to steal, kill, and destroy our walk in Christ? Therefore, let’s end this section with the following truth:

When we start MEASURING our spiritual progress then we fall prey to our flesh and Satan’s objective to DISCOURAGE us and bring us to a place where we will GIVE UP on our Christian walk.

Question: Are your unmet expectations about your spiritual walk causing you to try harder or are they moving towards giving up on your walk in Christ?

4. Those that are COWARDS

During some of the battle scene of “The Pacific” series, I saw men running in cowardly fear from the battlefield. Like on real battlefields, there are “spiritual” cowards in the spiritual battlefield as well. Let me define what I mean by “spiritual” cowards.

These are Christians that run from their Christian walk and run back to themselves as the source because of:

- Fear of the pain they might experience if they walk by faith.
- Fear of failure.
- Fear of not measuring up to God’s standards or expectations.
- Fear of what God might do or not do.
- Fear of losing control.
- Fear of _____.

We all can experience these fears from time to time but if we let these fears overwhelm us and not let Christ deal with our fears, then we will find ourselves running away from God.

UNDEALT with fears can PARALYZE us and OVERWHELM us to the point that we will run from the ONLY One who can set us free from those fears.

Question: Are your fears causing you to run from or give up on God?

5. Those who have been taken PRISONER.

As many soldiers during World War II were taken prisoner, so too do Christians become imprisoned. During my time in ministry, I find that Christians are imprisoned in four main areas:

a. Unbelief

Unbelief about God, His promises, and about our true identity seem to be the key areas that I find Christians struggle with. If we don't allow the Holy Spirit to take us from unbelief to belief then our unbelief will move us away from living from Christ.

Question: Is your unbelief about God, His promises, and your true identity hindering your spiritual momentum? If so, in what ways?

b. False beliefs

The false beliefs or lies that we believe about God, ourselves or living the Christian life that are not transformed by the Holy Spirit will keep us imprisoned and eventually prevent us from moving forward in our Christian walk.

Question: Are your false beliefs about God, yourself, and living the Christian life creating doubt about God or creating doubt about whether or not you will ever be set free from those false beliefs?

c. Woundedness

I grieve over how we can wound others as a result of our own prisons of woundedness. Because of our own woundedness we can reject, try to control, or get angry with others. I have heard it said many times, and I agree, that wounded people wound people. The Holy Spirit wants to heal your woundedness so that the cycle of wounding your husband, kids, or others will stop.

d. Fleshly behaviors/strongholds (i.e. pornography, anger, fear, self-confidence, etc.)

To varying degrees we are all experiencing some degree of imprisonment to our fleshly strongholds. However, I trust that you are seeking Christ to set you free from them. If not, these undealt with strongholds will fortify your prison walls and will be used by Satan to persuade you that there is no hope of freedom.

6. Those who have DIED.

Of course, in any battle there will be those who die. While we praise their sacrifice, there is a form of death in the spiritual battle among Christians that is not praiseworthy. I call these Christians "dead" men walking. Here is what I mean by that phrase:

Dead men walking are those Christians:

- Walking in the death of performance and self-sufficiency.
- Walking in the death of their unbelief that God really cares for them or loves them.
- Walking in the death of defeat, bondage, and woundedness.
- Who see no other option but to live life from themselves as the source.

I grieve over this type of Christian. I know because I was one for 30 years. I pray that if you feel that you are in this category that you will seek to understand what it means for Christ to be your Life and your Source so that you will experience victory, freedom, healing of woundedness, and the transformation that He promises.

If We Don't Endure And Keeping Walking By Faith?

What if we continue to be stuck on the beaches of fear and unbelief? What if we continue living out of unhealed

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESS ON!

woundedness? What if we stay locked in the prisons of our strongholds? The word of God gives us the answer in the following verses.

***"Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble."** Proverbs 28:14*

*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a **sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.**"* Hebrews 3:12

If we don't endure and keep walking by faith we will harden our hearts towards God and turn away from Him. I hope that just reading those words creates a "holy" fear within. I can't think of two worse consequences than these. So if you find yourself moving in these two directions, I pray that what we discuss in this last chapter will encourage you and give you the desire to press on.

Conclusion

I hope this analogy of the Pacific battlefields to the spiritual battlefields has been helpful. Maybe you can identify with one or of these examples. You may be stuck on the beach of fear or unbelief, stuck in your woundedness, paralyzed by your fears, imprisoned by false beliefs, or even walking in some form of death. You might be feeling helpless, fearful, or even hopeless that you can or will press on. If this is where you are, there is good news and that is what I want to end this study with .

***"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."** Philippians 3:14*

We have talked about several different types of soldiers on the battlefield. However, there is one more that we will end with. Those soldiers that PRESS ON. As I watched "The Pacific" I was amazed that in spite of the chaos, carnage, and fear, these Marines kept pressing on and moving forward. They were determined not to stop until they had reached their objective.

Like these Marines, we, as spiritual soldiers, must press on as well. We are called to press on and move forward in our walk with Christ in spite of:

Adversity	Unmet expectations	False Beliefs
Confusion	Woundedness	Strongholds
Unbelief	Frustration	Fears
Failures	Relational Struggles	Perplexity

In this lesson, we will talk about practical application of what it looks like in the midst of all of the above to press on.

Endurance

I thought, before we get into what endurance looks like, that we look at three definitions of endurance.

1. "The POWER to withstand pain or hardships; the ability or STRENGTH to continue despite fatigue, stress, or other adverse conditions."

Even though this is Webster's definition, this has great spiritual application as well. In the case of a Christian, the power is the Holy Spirit, and the source of our strength to continue enduring is Christ Himself. When you insert those two truths then endurance is accomplished through the power of the Spirit and the supernatural strength that can only be provided by Christ. We see this in Ephesians 3:16:

*"... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened with power through His Spirit** in the inner man." Ephesians 3:16*

2. To STAND one's ground instead of fleeing.

*"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore **keep standing firm** and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1*

*"... for now we really live, if **you stand firm in the Lord.**"
1 Thessalonians 3:8*

This is another definition from the Greek Lexicon which reveals that there are times in battle that we press on and there are times we hold on to the ground that we have gained. This is so true of you on the spiritual battlefield as well.

As you move forward into a greater victory and freedom, the enemy is going to increase his assaults on your life and will want to take back the ground that you have gained and that he and your flesh have lost. The only way to stand firm and not lose ground is to press in to Jesus and walk in His steadfastness. (Steadfastness means that we will be immovable in Christ.)

3. To WAIT for God with a SPIRITUAL EXPECTATION.

This is an interesting definition of endurance from the Hebrew Lexicon. To wait for God is part of what it means to endure. Look at the following two verses to understand why waiting is a vital part of enduring.

*"My soul **waits in silence for God only**; From Him is my **salvation (deliverance).**" Psalm 62:1 (Parenthesis mine)*

*"Yet those who **wait for the LORD** will **gain new strength**; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary." Isaiah 40:31*

I am convinced that the most difficult part of endurance is waiting. In fact, it is the hardest part of the Christian life. We are a very active people who don't really like to wait. However, with God it is a vital part of endurance. Why? Because there is a spiritual expectation that we can have when we wait on God. The two spiritual expectations in the verses above are deliverance and strength.

WAITING is an essential part of endurance because with waiting comes SPIRITUAL EXPECTATIONS.

What are some other examples of spiritual expectations we can have with endurance in waiting? Peace, patience, wisdom, understanding, and discernment just to name a few.

4. A SUPERNATURAL characteristic of CHRIST in you.

*“For you have **need of endurance**, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” Hebrews 10:36*

*“My God shall supply **all your needs in Christ Jesus.**” Philippians 4:19*

There is no doubt that we all need endurance and Christ meets that need by being our endurance. As with all of the Christ-like characteristics (peace, joy, rest, etc.), endurance is provided and produced by Christ Himself.

This type of endurance is supernatural and limitless. Therefore, you don't need to try and muster up in your own strength more endurance. (Which will eventually fail you.) Simply take steps of faith asking Christ to supply His endurance.

Example: “Lord, I am in great pain and in need of endurance to press on. I am trusting you to BE my endurance and my willingness to take the next step of faith.”

Jesus Had A NEED For Endurance

*“... who for the joy set before Him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has **endured such hostility** by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Hebrews 12:2b-3*

When we look at passages like this it might be easy to say to ourselves, “Jesus endured because He is God.” This is true but while living on this earth Jesus was man first. In other words, Jesus had needs like you and me but while on earth, He did not meet His own needs. In these verses,

Jesus needed a spiritual endurance that was provided to Him by the Father and Holy Spirit.

Therefore, Jesus, like you and me, could NOT have endured unless He drew from the endurance produced and provided by the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT.

The difference for you and me is that Jesus is the Provider and Producer for endurance.

Truths Concerning Endurance

In this section, I would like to share with you three key truths concerning endurance.

1. WILLINGNESS To Endure

*“He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. **Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.**” Matthew 26:39*

Remember my definition of endurance in the first chapter: “The willingness to take the next step of faith in spite of anything or anyone that tempts you to give up on God.” The key word in this definition of endurance is **willingness**.

If you come to a place of unwillingness then you will not take the next step of faith. You see Jesus in Matthew 26:39 had the same choice you and I have when it came to going to the cross. “Enduring the cross” in Hebrews 12:2 means that Jesus was willing to go to the cross. (Note: Jesus struggled with being willing to go to the cross.)

The problem is that when you are unwilling to take the next step of faith you can't make yourself willing to be willing. Therefore, when you get to the place where you are unwilling to take the next step of faith, ask God to move you from unwillingness to willingness.

Example: Let's assume that you have prayed for many years for a spouse and God has not met that expectation. Satan influences your flesh to a point that you are no longer willing to trust God. At that point, a prayer might be, "Lord, because you have not met my expectation, I am unwilling to trust You. I am asking you to transform my heart so that I will be willing to continue trusting You even though You have not answered my prayer."

You also might consider asking your spouse or a friend to intercede for you when you find yourself unwilling to trust God.

2. Endurance may include some "HOLY" venting

*"Trust in Him at all times, O people; **Pour out your heart before Him**; God is a refuge for us. Selah." Psalms 62:8*

One of the things I love about David is that when God did not meet his expectations then he let God know how he felt about Him. He was always very honest with God. I call this "holy" venting. I think part of the process of endurance may be telling God how you honestly feel about the struggle you are facing that is testing your endurance. Look at David's honesty in Psalm 13:

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Turn and

answer me, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall." Psalm 13:1-4

Have you felt like David before? Have you asked the "how long?" questions? Most likely, all of us have at one time or another. However, after our "holy" venting, there must come a step of faith. Look at verses 5 and 6 in Psalm 13 to understand what I mean.

***"BUT** I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me." Psalm 13:5-6*

After David threw his tantrum, (I think on some level we may all be grown up two-year-olds who can still throw tantrums.) he took a step of faith. That step of faith started with one word: "BUT." That one word tells us that even though David was really struggling, he knew God would not fail him with the result that he could rejoice in advance concerning how the Lord would deliver him. We also see the word "but" being used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9:

*"...we are afflicted in every way, **but** not crushed; perplexed, **but** not despairing; persecuted, **but** not forsaken; struck down, **but** not destroyed;" 2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

Each time Paul uses the word "but" he is telling us to take another step of faith because he believes that God is faithful, good, and He is in control.

3. Increasing Our Endurance Is Like EXERCISING

*"for we **walk by faith**, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7*

We all know that if we walk or run we increase our physical endurance. It is the same with spiritual endurance. Early on our spiritual endurance levels are less because of the short time we have been living from Christ as our Source of endurance.

However, like with walking/running, each step of faith builds our spiritual endurance. As we grow in Christ, the overflow of that growth will be an increased endurance. Therefore, even though you may not believe your endurance is increasing with each step of faith, it truly is.

WHY Do We Endure?

*“And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28*

I believe that we endure for one primary reason: so that God will work our endurance for His divine good purposes. Therefore, in this section, let’s look at the divine good purposes that result from our continuing to endure.

1. We Endure To Experience More Of WHO Christ Is IN Us

What is one of the ways that we experience more of who Christ is to us? Through enduring struggles, suffering, and disappointments. It is as a result of enduring through these things that you will experience Christ’s peace, joy, love, etc. We see two examples of this below.

“We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the

*Lord’s dealings, that the **Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**” James 5:11*

*“And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be **perfect and complete**, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4*

We see that it took all the suffering that Job went through to experience Christ’s compassion and mercy. (I am not sure I want to go through all that he suffered to experience that but it was the only way for Job to experience it.) In James, the “perfect result” of your endurance is that you will experience the completeness you have in Christ.

In other words, you will experience Christ’s “complete” love, acceptance, forgiveness, power, etc. This verse also means that if you are living from Christ then He will be enough in every struggle you face.

2. Endurance GROWS Our Faith and Trust In God (Divine Stretching)

It is a spiritual reality that God, because of our stubborn hearts or because we live in a fallen world and He brings good out of the bad uses our struggles for what I call “divine stretching” of our faith. Look at an example of Paul’s divine stretching in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10:

*“For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves **so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God** who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.” 2 Corinthians 1:8-10*

Can you feel Paul's pain? He is despairing and wanting to give up but he endured. What was the divine good purpose? That he would not trust in himself but grow deeper in his trust for God. I will be honest with you, I am never excited about the divine stretching through pain.

However, I think you might agree with me if you have been walking with the Lord for some time that pain is often the "accelerator" in growing our faith.

3. Endurance Moves Us From The Death of SELF To LIFE In Christ

Suffering is not the only way to move from death of self to life in Christ but like our previous example, it tends to accelerate the process. We see this in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 and in John 12:24 below:

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:8-11

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." John 12:24

I wish their didn't have to be death before life but when it comes to our "self-life," it must die in order for the Life of Christ (His peace, joy, power, etc.) to flow in and through us. I hope that you can see that through your struggles the importance of how the Lord using them to move you from the death of self to Life in Christ.

4. Through Endurance We Can Experience God's PROMISES

"For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised." Hebrews 10:36

We all want to experience God's promises. However, part of the gauntlet we must go through to experience those promises is suffering. The promise in Hebrews 10:36 is that if we endure, we will experience God's promises of victory, freedom, healing of our woundedness, etc.

5. Through Endurance We Develop CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDES

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." Romans 5:3-5

Part of God's destiny for our lives is to be transformed into Christ-likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). While Christ-likeness does not always include suffering, a key divine good purpose produced by our enduring suffering is our development of the following Christ-like attitudes.

Unconditional love	Victory	Worth
Acceptance	Faith	Freedom
Patience	Strength	Peace
Forgiveness	Power	Security
Understanding	Wisdom	Discernment
Adequacy	Humility	Boldness
Christ-confidence	Rest	Righteousness
Selflessness	Hope	Compassion
Fearlessness	Courage	Gentleness
Christ-Control	Joy	Faithfulness

If you are struggling right now, know with confidence, that God is using that struggle to produce one or more of these Christ-like attitudes (listed above) in you.

6. Endurance Grows Your GOD-CONFIDENCE In WHO God Is and WHAT God Can Do

Let's look at David's walk with God and see how the Lord used his struggles to build his God-confidence.

*"O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my ****soul,**'There is no deliverance for him in God. **But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head. I was crying to the LORD with my voice. And He answered me from His holy ****mountain.**'"*** Psalms 3:1-4

In spite of all that was happening to David, God delivered him. Through David's struggles, God built David's God-confidence. As we continue to walk by faith, we develop a history with God: a history of His faithfulness towards us. Therefore, the further down the road we are and the greater the history with God, the more God-confidence that we will have.

7. Endurance Grows Your HEART and LONGING For God

Look at the following verses to see what David's endurance produced concerning his heart for and his longing for God.

*"As the deer longs for streams of water, so **I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God.**"* Psalm 42:1,2

*"O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. **My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.**"* Psalm 63:1

*"When You said, 'Seek My face,' **my heart said to You, 'Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.**'"* Psalm 27:8

My friends, God wants your heart for Him to be like David's heart for Him. What we need to understand is that David's heart for God was for the most part forged through trials and suffering. Through his endurance, David saw God's heart for him which in turn gave him the desire to have a heart for God. We see this truth in 1 John 4:19

*"We love because He **first** loved us."*

8. We Also Endure As A WITNESS To Others

*"We **proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships you are suffering.**"* 2 Thessalonians 1:4

As we grow in Christ-likeness, our lives should become more about others. Therefore, one of the ways that we can minister Life to others is through our endurance. Paul is "proudly" telling others about how the Thessalonian Christians are enduring hardship and persecution. Just

like Paul, my desire is to “proudly” tell others about your endurance.

I trust that the divine good purposes listed above increase your willingness to press on in your spiritual journey because we know that we cannot afford to be stuck on the battlefield and become a casualty in the spiritual war we face every day.

You May Be STRUGGLING With Enduring

You may have read this far and you still find yourself struggling to be willing to endure the struggle you are now facing. I understand because I have been there. There are times in life when it seems impossible to take the next step of faith. You feel like your spiritual feet are stuck in concrete and unable to move. It is at times like these that you need to do what David did which was call out to the Lord.

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.” Psalm 18:6

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.” Psalm 50:15

My encouragement to you if you are where David is, is to call upon the Lord to BE your endurance, your willingness, and your power to take the next step of faith. If you do, He will answer you and give you that willingness to take the next step of faith

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3.

The Truth Is That You Have No Other Option But To

PRESS ON.

I know that we, many times during our spiritual journey, all are tempted to give up on God and our walk of faith. However, the truth is that we really have no other choice but to press on and keep moving because the only other option is to turn away from God and go back to ourselves as the source. I trust by now in your spiritual journey you realize that turning back to yourself as the source will only produce death and not Life.

To make my point, a good friend called me and went on non-stop for about 40 minutes about all his struggles. There was a lot of moaning and groaning and when he got through, I was about to respond but he said this, “Bill, I know what you are going to tell me: “just take another step of faith.” He was right because our only real option is to press on in Jesus.

Therefore, when you:

- are struggling,
- are perplexed,
- are frustrated,
- are confused, and
- you just want to give up, ...

... take another step of faith. Why?

***Because you KNOW that there is no other option but
JESUS.***

***“IF we ENDURE, we will also REIGN with Him...”
2 Timothy 2:12a***

If this is the first material that you have read from Christ Is Life Ministries then I would encourage you to go to our website listed below and you will find several discipleship materials including videos that are available online.

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Christ Is Life Ministries

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PRESS ON

I don't know the stresses that you are facing today but I think that you will agree with me that we all face stresses in life internally as well as externally. Whether it is circumstantial, relational, health, or worldly stress, we are experiencing stress in our lives.

Unfortunately, what I am seeing is that many Christians are taking ownership of their stress with the result that they internalize the stressors in their lives. As a result, the overflow of their stress is toxic to themselves as well as to everyone around them.

The question is: Does God intend for us to take ownership of any of life's stresses or are we designed to live from Christ's rest? The promise in Matthew 11:28 is this:

“Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you REST.”

God's design is for Christians to not take ownership of their stress. Rather, our design is to live moment by moment from Christ's rest. Therefore, in this book we will be looking at:

- The sources of stress.
- The negative impacts of stress.
- The meaning of Christ's rest.
- Living from Christ's rest.



Bill Loveless is the director of Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM). CILM is a non-profit, non-denominational ministry that focuses on discipleship. Our focus is teaching Christians what it means for Christ to be our Source for living the Christian life and what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness.

For further information, see the ministry website at: www.christislifeministries.com

