

Endure to the End

- Ron Stullenbarger -

The ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, contemporary of Socrates, and dubbed "*The Father of History*" by Cicero, made the following observation: "*Some men give up their designs when they have almost reached the goal; while others, on the contrary, obtain a victory by exerting, at the last moment, more vigorous efforts than ever before.*"

Arguably the most dedicated and effective missionary in the history of the Lord's church was the apostle Paul. He wrote to the church at Philippi from a Roman prison, saying: "*Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 3:12–14, NASB).

Endurance is the state of persevering. Endurance is staying under the load when others have given up the burden. It is remaining behind in fearful circumstances when all others have fled. It is continuing on no matter what obstacles or hardships stand in the way. Endurance is not the exciting, flash-in-the-pan virtue that many are seeking. It is a daily discipline requiring earnest trust and devotion.

Following Jesus requires endurance to the end. There is no drop-off point, time off for good behavior, or retirement. We must follow Jesus all the way or we have betrayed the trust that makes us His. In following Jesus, there is "*great reward*". But, we must "*not throw away our confidence*" (Hebrews 10:35). In the next verse, the inspired writer goes on to say, "*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.*"

As Jesus "*endured such hostility by sinners against Himself,*" stretching forward to complete His mission, saying, "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30); so we must "*run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus...who...endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*" (Hebrews 12:1-3). The closer to the end, the more earnestly we must strive to carry out Christ's purpose in our lives. Because of that coming Day, we must "*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:58).