

Endurance

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My title for today is:

Endurance

I would like to introduce you to three people I've met in my time in the church who have been through a lot. I won't describe the things they have been through; I just want you to get an idea of their longevity in holding onto God's truth and calling. I'll start with the first one, it's a man I know or I knew on the Oregon coast. The only reason I knew him—he's not in the church—is because I went to a small town to get my jalopy serviced because it needed some work and they have a good service center there. Except they take a long time. So here I am walking around the town of Tillamook, Oregon looking for something to do and there's not much.

But I did find a really good breakfast place. I happen to like chicken fried steak but usually it's made with pork sausage gravy but this place used brown gravy so I was in good condition. That only chewed up 45 minutes of my day. I went downtown to "Old Town". There is one particular street in Tillamook where all the buildings are connected, just off the sidewalk. Some are taller than others, some the sun never shines in. I was looking in windows of these stores and one was so dark and maybe 10 feet wide. There was a barber shop sign on the front door. So, I was interested and opened the door. I was surprised the place was even open, but it was. It was dark inside. About 10-11 feet wide but deep. At the back of this place, I saw a very, very small figure of a very, very old man sitting down in a single chair eating a sandwich. I said hello and he said hello. He said "Come on in." as he put his sandwich away, he insisted I sit down to get my hair cut. He was talkative. He never stopped for more than 45 minutes.

It was nearly an hour for a 15-minute haircut, but I had nothing to do. It was delightful to hear this guy's life story. He had been a barber for 65 years. He had owned the store for nearly 45 years. I don't think he's in business anymore. He talked and talked and it was so interesting. He was funny and he was good at what he did. When we finished, he took this cloth off around my neck and put it away. I stood up to pay him and stood in front of this big mirror he had in front of the chair. He said, "Do you want to see what the back looks like?" I said "Yeah." He said, "You face that mirror and I'll go get the mirror and hold it behind your head and see what you like or don't like." So, he comes with the big mirror, put it behind my head and it's not a mirror. It's not a mirror! It's a picture of a horse's rear end.

This was only a few years ago—like two. He charged \$10 for a haircut. \$10 for a haircut? Since he was so gracious and kind, I gave him the biggest tip I've given anybody. He was a nice old man; it was really great.

Moving on to another fellow I knew in the church. This man was 4 years old when he attended his first Feast 1947—Belnap Springs, Oregon. Herbert Armstrong was there with a few people who were in the church at that time. They had the whole resort. There was a little bridge over the McKenzie River—a suspension bridge. Calvin and his little buddies—a couple of kids being kids—were playing on this bridge over the running water. Herbert Armstrong saw this and didn't want to have anyone get hurt or injured, so he ran over there and scolded the kids and told them to get off the bridge. That was 1947. Come to the time near the time he died, he came to Eugene, Oregon for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Church of God. Calvin was a big, grown man now—an adult. He thought he would go to see Mr. Armstrong and introduce himself. He walked up, Mr. Armstrong “You probably don't remember me but” he got stopped right there, dead in his tracks by Mr. Armstrong, who said, “Yes, I do remember you. You were one of those little brats on that bridge 40-some years ago.” He then told that story at the 75th anniversary of the Eugene, Oregon Church of God. There were several other speakers who told their stories about their time, their tenure, within the body of Christ.

Another time, 32 years ago in 1992, Colleen and I went to the Feast of Tabernacles in Banglador, India. If you don't like flying, it's not a great place to go and I don't like flying. But India is a great place to go. So, as happened from time to time at those big Feast sites where there was a lot of people, inevitably someone would get up during the Feast and ask the congregation, how many Feasts is this for you? How many are here for the first time. In that congregation of about 150 people, a couple of people raised their hand—it was their first Feast. Then he went 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 years and everybody's hands dropped. Nobody raised their hand except one lady—30 years. Then 35, then 40, then 45 and her hand was still up in the air. 50, her hand was still in the air. She was a native to India. Turns out her story was that at some point in her education came to the United States, did some studying and went back. About 15 years ago or so her obituary showed up in the United Church of God newspaper. She lived a a long time. As a matter of fact, today would have been her 82nd Feast.

Today is Calvin's 77th Feast—he is still alive. Pretty cool. Anyway, I didn't tell you anything about their lives because I don't know about a lot about their lives, but I do know one thing. All of us, having spent any amount of time in this church, being called by God for the purpose that He began with us, is going to finish that work with us. Not necessarily us doing great things, but we're going to walk through some stuff. We're going to walk through some trials and stresses—and they are big. For some, they are traumatic. For some, they are protracted and drawn out and take decades and decades of learning and experience to grow and overcome. Kind of like the picture of the hind end of a horse. Some things are a surprise—you just don't know; you don't see it coming.

Why? Why do we continue in all of the stresses and lessons we have to learn? I think we all know why. There is a promise to all of us. We stick around, we go through these things for the promise. Let's turn, just to discuss the promise, to 1 John 2, to begin with. Pretty straightforward.

1 John 2:24 *Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.*

25) *And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. (NKJV)*

That's what we seek. That's what God has promised and the bottom line is, it's worth the effort. Whatever it is, God wants us to walk through, it's going to be on a personal level. Everyone's journey is relatively on the same path. But everybody's experience is going to be a little bit different. Sometimes we have the opportunity to help and sometimes we don't because we don't know if someone is going through something terrible or awful. But we still continue on for the promise. In James 1, James talks about this too. Why we continue on and why we should continue on, because giving up is never an option.

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (NKJV)*

Paul mentions an encouraging thing for us to continue on in Philippians 3:10-14.

Philippians 3:10 *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

11) *if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

12) *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

13) *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,*

14) *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

One more example in 2 Peter 1:10-11.

2 Peter 1:10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble;*

11) *for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

One thing we'll see today as we go forward, endurance takes faith and it takes hope and it takes optimism. I want to look at three examples in scripture of people who endured exceedingly hard circumstances in their life and how it turned out. These people were all attacked and given sufferings directly from God and challenged directly by Satan himself. I wouldn't want to tackle Satan by myself; it would never work. With God helping in these three people's lives you'll see what they went through and how they prevailed at the end, not having received the promise because that's afar off, but they knew they had it.

1. Job

Who was Job? Let's turn to Job 1.

Job 1:1 *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. (NKJV)*

Well, who says so? In verse 8, it was God who said so. Satan was there.

8) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (NKJV)

God doesn't compliment people a lot. That's a pretty big compliment. He's blameless and he's a man, he's a farmer, a business man, he has family. Satan got implicit, clear instructions that he could inflict pain and afflict Job as much as he pleased but not to touch his life. So, of course, the first thing he brings is grief and trauma. Kills his children, his business is wiped out, his wife is there to see it. Then, he gets afflicted even more by God's permission. He inflicts his body because Satan said, *"If you touch his skin and torment him, he will curse You."* Of course, that happened. So, Job's wife saw all of this. She didn't say curse God and die until the time came when Job was on the ash heap. Let's read Job's response in verse 20-21. His response was pretty positive.

20) Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

21) And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD." (NKJV)

There's no cursing God; there's no animosity against God from Job. In chapter 2:7, another statement.

Job 2:7 *So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. (NKJV)*

And still, he did not curse God. Job endured something that many people don't—it was drawn out, it was protracted, it was long, it was tormenting, everything at once—all the grief you could imagine. The destruction of your business and your livelihood, the destruction of your family and then yourself wasting away on an ash pile in torment. In verse 9 and 10.

9) Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10) But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (NKJV)

Of course, his lessons weren't over and Job had something we do too. Job wasn't just stuck in the physical realm of his life because in Job 14, he says something that indicates his relationship with God. Like God said, he was blameless. Job 14:14.

Job 14:14 *If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes. (NKJV)*

He had eternity in his heart. Even Solomon in Ecclesiastes says that about the spirit of man—that man has eternity in his heart. What did Job learn? Let's go to Job 42 and see the end of the matter. He didn't give up; he didn't lose heart. You can read what he was going through, the suffering he was going through.

Job 42:2 *"I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. (NKJV)*

verse 5 and 6.

*5) "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.
6) Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes." (NKJV)*

The end of verse 9.

*9) ... for the LORD had accepted Job.
10) And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. (NKJV)*

Dropping down to verse 16.

16) After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. (NKJV)

So, Job died like we all will, full of days.

It's interesting to think about one of the things that happened with Job is, he was the subject of immense powers. God giving Satan the power to do something and God challenged Satan and Satan lost and Job won. It didn't work. All of Satan's power against a single man and it didn't work. That's the same thing with us when we go through whatever it is we are going to go through from now forward. It's not us who stand alone, it's not us who produce ourselves whatever God may consider good and righteous for the future. That's Job.

The next good example of someone who is directly challenged by Satan and by God and caused to suffer is:

2. The Apostle Paul.

We read that beginning in Acts 9. You know the history of Paul how he persecuted the church and then was called. In chapter 9 he tells Ananias as he's on the way to see Paul:

Acts 9:15 *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
16) For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*
(NKJV)

God doesn't necessarily show that to us but he sure did in this case. Paul's entire ministry—20 years or however long it was—was continually one thing after another. Suffering after suffering after suffering. One of the examples is in Acts 27 where he was one of the captives on the ship with 200 prisoners and of course the ship crashes into the rocks and is falling apart. It was drifting and tossed by the wind for 14 days. 14 days without eating—nothing. That's a pretty big deal; some people would die in that amount of time. Especially throwing up every day and all day. I was at the coast one day and a friend of my wife decided her son in law and I should go out in the ocean and do some fishing. We agreed, so we got on a dory boat with 5 other people and launched right off the beach. It was a gentle, beautiful morning until we got about 100 yards from the beach. The rain and the waves just started to roll in. Even the captain said we shouldn't be out here, this is crazy. In 3 hours, we limited out and made our way back. There was a little girl standing in front of me, she was only 12 years old and she was throwing up the whole time. She kept at it—it was amazing. She was throwing up, got back, reeling in her fish and she caught more fish than anybody. She added to people's limits when they couldn't limit themselves. It was embarrassing but who am I? I'm not a good fisherman, I know that. My fishing rods are hanging in my garage. I don't even use the stupid things. This is only 3 hours of seasickness, not 14 days. 14 days? That's just amazing to me.

That kind of suffering we really don't have a lot of that. I don't know too many people who have suffered like that. That was at the end of Paul's ministry. He talks more about his suffering. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 11. He had a job to do. He couldn't divert from doing his work—from doing his job that God had called him to do. He couldn't escape the things that God was trying to accomplish with him, in preaching.

1 Corinthians 4:11 *To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.
12) And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;
13) being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.* (NKJV)

That's not a glorious apostleship and ministry surrounded by big money and that kind of thing. You think about the dedication that Paul had to the things that God called him to do. Absolutely astonishing—amazing that he had the fortitude and strength not within himself, but from God. He was dedicated before that with immense zeal to do what he thought was right as a Pharisee but now, this. He must have wondered because the Pharisees that were high up in any kind of position, didn't have to work for money. But now, Paul did. His whole life he worked. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 11 and talk more about Paul's suffering and the things that he had to endure.

2 Corinthians 11:23 *Are they ministers of Christ? —I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.*

24) *From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.*

25) *Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; [He doesn't even talk about the 14 days in starvation]*

26) *in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; (NKJV)*

It's enough to wear yourself out with all the stuff he had to go through, let alone being given the job of an apostle to travel to teach the churches, to go back to those churches to see how they are growing, to feed the flock, water the flock, take care of them and to generally be concerned about them. Not just fulfill the responsibility but he really, really cared for them. And really, really loved them. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 12:7.

2 Corinthians 12:7 *And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.*

8) *Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*

9) *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

10) *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (NKJV)*

That's quite a proclamation. Eventually, when someone suffers as much as Paul did, they want to get out of it. You have to want reprieve—a rescue, a respite—from that kind of suffering continually. He traveled so much. He said:

"Therefore I will most gladly boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

He couldn't have done it without the power of Christ; without God, without His Spirit, without His protection, without providing for Paul. He writes in 2 Timothy 3:10 he continues on.

2 Timothy 3:10 *But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,*
11) *persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.*
12) *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*
(NKJV)

We all desire to live Godly in Christ. We're not Godly by ourselves, but Christ is and the work that He began in us, He will finish. Whatever that means for us to walk through, we're going to have to walk through it. It might not be that bad, but it might. Who knows what is coming down the road in this present evil country and the darkness and perversions that we live in. It might be a living hell at one point, we don't know. There's God in heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, they both know us personally and are involved in our lives and have no interest in letting anybody go. God in His grace, the Father, gives us aid. To the angels He didn't, but to His children here on this earth, inhabiting these bodies, which we will shed, He gives us aid to make it through all of these things. He also expects a lot, like He did of Paul. He had regard for Job, but yet He ended up helping Job through a tough time. Through a revelation of what he needed to do to change—change his perspective. We need aid and we do get aid. Let's look at 2 Timothy 4:6-8 and we'll see Paul's approach—his perspective on his life and suffering and of the work that God gave him to do.

2 Timothy 4:6 *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.*
7) *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*
8) *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.* (NKJV)

Hebrews 10:32, more of Paul's perspective on his sufferings.

Hebrews 10:32 *But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:*
33) *partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;*
34) *for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.*
35) *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*
36) *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:* (NKJV)

We know what that promise is; it's eternal life in the Kingdom of God. That kingdom is coming, it's not here now. That's evident. It will be here one day. Time will pass. Just look at the day of Atonement. It seems like the Day of Atonement is going to last forever. You're hungry, you're sleepy and might have a nap—6 hours to go. One day, in our personal life and our perspective, the time between now and the establishment of God's Kingdom will be gone. We're going to be standing there, facing the judge, we will be resurrected and we'll forget all of this stuff. All the stuff we suffered. That is such a big deal now. Sometimes simple things—it doesn't take a shipwreck and starving for 2 weeks—sometimes it's the simple things that cause us to stumble.

I remember living in Portland, going to work at 5:30 so I can start my job at 6 and the traffic. You can't believe in a short amount of time, how much you can sin on the way to work. It's just beyond belief. Then a big trial comes along and by God's help you get through it and you weren't near the idiot on that day you went to work. Looking forward to that time, we will see the end of all of this business of suffering and troubles and trials. We're flesh and blood, we all have needs. Paul's perspective is really good. He never lost sight of why he was called, why he was born, or the fear of God.

The last example is someone who was more challenged by God and Satan than anybody who ever lived.

3. Jesus Christ

One of the things you have to consider about Jesus Christ—Paul's didn't know exactly what was going to happen. Sometimes the Holy Spirit kept him from going to one place or another. Jesus Christ was slain from the foundation of the earth. He carried that baggage—that burden—with him all of that time. He didn't let it get to Him to stop Him from what He was doing. But think about the road to destruction of His physical body and all the stuff He had to do. He didn't like that day. When He was praying in the garden it was visceral, it was deep, it was painful. It was awful! But just like us, the Father saw Him through all of those difficult times. Let's read about our Savior in Isaiah 52:13-14.

Isaiah 52:13 *Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.*

14) Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; (NKJV)

Isaiah 53:1 *Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*

2) For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3) He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

- 4) *Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.*
- 5) *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*
- 6) *All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*
- 7) *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.*
- 8) *He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*
- 9) *And they made His grave with the wicked— But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.*
- 10) *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.*
- 11) *He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.*
- 12) *Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. (NKJV)*

Talk about love—when He was abused by those around Him. When He knew from the foundation of the earth that He was going to suffer these things and yet He makes intercession for the transgressors and does so willingly and silently on the tree and not resisting, but willingly for all of us and the entire world. Hebrews 12:1-2 just to further carry on.

Hebrews 12:1 *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,*
 2) *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. (NKJV)*

That was His perspective. He knew that's where He would end up. It wasn't the permanent suffering He was going through, but it sure was long—decades. Thousands of years before that and He did it willingly. Philippians 2:5-11.

Philippians 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*
 6) *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

7) *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*
8) *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*
9) *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,*
10) *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,*
11) *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NKJV)*

His suffering ended—He knew where He was going to end up and His glory was great. He didn't lose perspective, He didn't lose sight—He kept the vision, as it says in Hebrews 10:12.

Hebrews 10:12 *But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God ... (NKJV)*

Is there a greater position than that? No—it's only God the Father who is Supreme and Sovereign. But Christ will own that position forever. No one will ever exceed Him and He deserves it. The Father deserves it. The Father praises Him and He is in glory forever. He is our judge. He knows what we go through because He went through it Himself. Let's look at Romans 8:16-18.

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*
17) *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*
18) *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (NKJV)*

1 Peter 4:12-13, continuing on in these thoughts.

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*
13) *but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (NKJV)*

Verse 19.

19) *Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (NKJV)*

James 1:2-4.

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

- 3) *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*
4) *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (NKJV)*

Easy to say, easy to talk about, having patience through these difficult times—through sufferings. You know when you do. You know when you pray to God and He answers. You know that He helps you. You know it for a fact. It's not something you can convince other people about, but you know that when you walk with God and in fear of God and love is appearing—He gives aid to us. God gave Him aid when He was walking through the same things.

We're going to read a few scriptures still while we wind up. The Feast allows us to think about the future—the Kingdom of God that is coming—and that this life is temporary. The places we live in are temporary. The place that the spirit lives in—this body—is temporary. We occupy them for a short time. The body is going to go away, but the spirit returns to God and our hope and desire is when it does, there's more in that package than when He gave it. That there is something there—fruit born. That we can serve Him forever.

As we keep the Feast, let it serve as an encouragement to us. Our struggles are not in vain and it is all temporary. There is an end to it and the reward is great. It can't be stated enough how great it is and how well worth it is to continue on. Let's read a little more in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

1 Corinthians 15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*

51) *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—*

52) *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

53) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54) *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

55) *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

56) *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.*

57) *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

58) *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (NKJV)*

Everything matters. Everything we go through matters. Every thought of our heart, every thought of our mind either builds or tears down, but it's not stagnant. It never just sits in the middle and just sits there. It's all active. Let's continue on, just a couple more scriptures to encourage us that giving up is not an option. We have to continue on with

the strength of God. We also have to be the ones who decide to carry on. When we get weak, when we may let down from time to time, that's a time for us to take note. To drop to our knees before God. To fast and do whatever it takes to get back on track. Stay in your book, stay on your knees—carry on. Romans 8:35-39.

Romans 8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

36) *As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."*

37) *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

38) *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,*

39) *nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)*

1 Peter 1:3-9. I know this is a lot of scriptures, but you love them all. You can't hear them enough. That's wrong—I've done that before. It's wrong. So, it's much of the same thought—very much the same thought and genre. I do want to leave us on a note of encouragement—a short Psalm to finish off. We are not walking alone. We are walking with someone who loves us and protects us and keeps us from the things that we cannot keep ourselves from. We have a duty to stay out of harm's way. To stay away from certain things that we know better. But the things we can't see—there's the "God factor". Let's conclude with Psalm 121. It's a short Psalm but it's a good one—it's encouraging.

Psalm 121:1 *I will lift up my eyes to the hills— From whence comes my help?*

2) *My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.*

3) *He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.*

4) *Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

5) *The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade at your right hand.*

6) *The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night.*

7) *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.*

8) *The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore. (NKJV)*