

ALL CHRISTIAN'S FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

KEEPING ON IN FAITH AND NOT IN FEAR

When Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, there were many people buried in the ruins. Some were found in cellars, probably having gone there for security. Some were found in the upper rooms of buildings. However, there was one Roman sentinel found standing at the city gate where his captain had placed him, with his hands still grasping his weapon. While the earth shook beneath him, and floods of ashes and cinders covered him, he had stood at his post. And there, after a thousand years, this faithful man was to be found.

Neatly tucked into the great chapter of faith, Hebrews 11:27 is a two word epitaph/biography of one of the great characters of the Old Testament. Describing Moses, various translations read, 'He endured' or 'He kept right on' or 'He persevered' or 'He was resolute' or 'He never flinched' or 'He held staunchly to his purpose'. In the Book of Hebrews, three others are described as enduring – Abraham (6:15), Hebrew Christians (10:35) and Christ (12:3). In the verse, however, the actual Greek word for endured is only used once in the Bible, and gives the idea of being strong and firm.

Starting, Finishing and Enduring

It is a great thing to start well. It is no small matter to finish strong. However, it is very hard to endure when the going is mundane, dreary or repetitive. Fine beginnings and noble resolutions are not the sole ingredients of endurance. As Christ pointed out, it is not the start of building the tower but the ability to continue which counts. One of the hardest things about life is that it is daily. It is hard to express the deep disappointment with those that once ran well, but for some reasons have ceased to endure. It was not the Lord who moved from them, but they from the God of all grace, who gives adequate strength to endure. One of the great evidences for me of the truth of the gospel is that fifteen years after having trusted Christ, I am still as convinced and passionate about it as ever I was. God is well able to keep us and keep His vision for us. My relationship with God is not one of my passing enthusiasms!

Endurance for Moses was not straightforward. There was a constant barrage of reasons to give up. The world's most powerful man, Pharaoh, treated him with contempt. The Hebrew people were stubborn, constantly grumbling, blaming Moses, complaining and rebelling. Miriam and Aaron's criticism created words which cut deeply into Moses' heart; there were bitter disappointments, such as when ten of the twelve spies, and then the people of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, led a cold, sinister, sneaky conspiracy against him. These were not the 'battles' of youth. Remember Moses began his greatest work at the age of eighty!

We are told why Moses endured. It was because of 'seeing Him who is invisible'. This was not a once for all experience, but for Moses it meant continually keeping the Lord at the centre, a constant drinking at the fountain of God's love, and maintaining a sense of eternal purpose. 'Seeing' is to be our constant occupation. To keep Christ and eternity not only in view, but also in focus, motivates consistency in our walk with God. Oswald Chambers said, 'We are uncertain of the next step, but we are certain of God's determination to accomplish His goals no

matter what we may think. However, if we can let go our own 'will' and promote His, and do the duty that lies ahead of us, He packs our life with surprises all the time.' Let us keep looking up, for God is continually looking down at us.

Erosion?

The greatest danger for those of us who have been on the Christian pathway for sometime is that of gentle erosion. There is an initial excitement and enthusiasm – about knowing and serving the Lord. However, with the passing of time, there can be slow and steady disappointment, which leaves us less and less confident in Christian service. We need not speak for the Lord, He will surely judge all of us as regards our activities in the body. To be relevant in God's presence, we need not to be afraid of people whose tongues are set to destroy us. They can only destroy the character, never can they destroy the Spirit of God in us. Moreover, whosoever destroys others on their way up will be met with equal measure on their way down. Therefore, we must be able to face the challenges before us, only that we need to be very close to God and to trust in His promises.

Moses was not authoritative or an isolationist as some alleged him to be. The enduring of Moses included involvement with, leading of, ministering to and lifting up of the people. Effective, enduring ministry is based upon our close relationship with God. Noah built his ark and pleaded with the people for 120 years without apparent success. He endured. Jeremiah preached for over sixty years, with no positive response to his message. He endured. Daniel prayed three times a day and found himself in a den of lions. He endured. Isaiah volunteered for service saying, 'Here am I, send me.' Eventually he was sawn in two, but he had endured!

John the Baptist fearlessly spoke the truth to Herod, and was beheaded. Again, he had endured. Peter preached the gospel to gentiles and other, his idea was miscarried by other disciples and was finally crucified upside down. He too had endured. John preached and planted churches, outliving each of the other disciples, and was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, but he endured. Paul suffered for the cause of Christ for over three decades and was probably burned to death in one of Nero's gardens here in Rome. He endured, fighting a good fight, and finishing his course. The Lord Jesus endured both a life of obedience and death by crucifixion. He set the standard, but more, he gives the grace to endure.

Michelangelo said, 'Art is a jealous god. It requires the complete and whole man.' The true and living God makes no less demands, but abundantly blesses us as we go His way. Are we enduring? It is no light question. We are approaching the end of this millennium, what really matters as we slide into the next century, is endurance. That is the vital barometer of our true commitment. 'Having done all, let us stand.' (Ephesians 6:13). In times of moral and spiritual laxity, let us endure. When wickedness appears to be winning, let us endure. When in times of crisis, let us endure. When no one will know if we have compromised, let us endure. Let us endure in our walk with God, our turning away from sin, our habitual prayerfulness, and seeking after holiness. If Christ endured, should not we too? He will be faithful to us...always. Can you think of a more commendable epitaph than 'he endured'? Let it be said of you and me, that we endured.