

Think with me today about patient endurance. Think with me about staying the course, holding fast to something. If we say that we must stick with something, then we how much can we take?

How Long Can We Endure in a Crisis?

How much can an adult endure? If you're ever stranded in the wilderness, are caught in a burning building, or find that your scuba tank has run out of oxygen, remember these survival rules courtesy of National Geographic magazine:

- 1 *Humans can survive for just 2 to 3 minutes without air, but with training it's possible to hold your breath for 11 minutes.*
- 2 *Humans can survive for just 10 minutes at 300° F (children can only survive a few minutes at 120° F).*
- 3 *Humans can endure barely 30 minutes of exposure to 40° F water.*
- 4 *Humans can survive for up to 7 days without water.*
- 5 *Humans can survive for about 45 days without food.¹*

I don't really know how they figured those numbers out. I really do not even want to know how they figured some of them out. But I like to hear stories about people who "stay the course." I like to hear about people who persevere under trial. Take for example this story of one who finished the Boston Marathon, though late:

Long after the sun had set on the Boston Marathon, the official clock turned off, and the crowds had all but gone home, 39 year old Venezuelan, Maickel Melamed crossed the finish line around 4 A.M., 20 hours after the race began. What made Maickel's race significant is that he suffers from a disease similar to muscular dystrophy, which meant he didn't so much run the race as walk it. As he reflected on his accomplishment, Maickel stated, "In any marathon, you have to know why you're doing it. Because in the last mile, the marathon will ask you." Part of Maickel's motivation came from wanting to honor Boston Children's Hospital where he was treated as a child.²

I absolutely love stories like that! He kept with it and he did finish the race. This was the case even though he was at a severe disadvantage.

This is also the case for the church in today's world as well as the church in Philadelphia. As we look at this church we see a theme of waiting. We see a theme of **patient endurance**.

So a **theme**:

In the letter to the church at Philadelphia we see a theme of Patient endurance.

An **application** for us is that we also must patiently endure this world as we wait for Jesus.

Let's read the letter to the church at Philadelphia:

¹ *Temptation—How long can you hold on when tough trials come into your life?*

Lesley Alderman, The Book of Times (William Morrow, 2013), page 311

² *Stephen Nordbye; source: Evan Allen, "Marathon provides a lesson: Inspiring guys can finish last" Boston Globe (4-22-15)*

Revelation 3:7-13:

“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

*I am coming soon. **Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.** The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Philadelphia:

- Philadelphia on a large plan
- Susceptible to earthquakes
- People usually lived, not in the city, but in the outskirts in large one story houses. This was so that when, not if but when, earthquakes hit the city would not fall on them.
- They had a lot of vineyards
- A lot of sheep for clothing
- Traditional deities:
 - zeus
 - Hestia: The goddess of the hearth and home
 - Imperial cult again
 - Judaism
 - Evidence of a synagogue
 - Jesus says: to the messenger...
 - They key of David
 - This is a modulation of the imagery from the first chapter, this varies
 - In Chapter 1 Jesus has a key of death and hades
 - The key of David is playing into the Jewish idea of a restored Kingdom which will be a Davidic Kingdom.
 - The key of death and hades from fallen Babylon of chapter 1 may be modulated here to be a key of David
 - This key lets people in and out of fallen Babylon
 - This is the second of the good churches.
 - There are no negatives
 - They have little power
 - They are marginalized
 - Those of the synagogue of Satan, just like with the other good church—Smyrna

- Here is the Jewish synagogue aligning themselves with the Roman authorities to persecute Christians. They are joining themselves with fallen Babylon.

Let's look at the promises to the church in Philadelphia. They must have patient endurance. They must patiently endure and then they will receive these promises:

- 1 Their enemies will fall down before them (3:9)
 - a. Notice that in verse 9. Those who are the synagogue of satan will fall down before them. We talked about the synagogue of satan with the church in Smyrna in Revelation 2:8-11.
 - b. Smyrna was another of the good churches in Revelation. We know that the Christians in Philadelphia had been thrown out of the synagogue. It appears that the Jewish people had been aligning themselves with the Roman empire which would represent the fallen Babylonian system. In aligning themselves with Rome and all that they represent they are a synagogue of Satan.
 - c. Jesus says that these people will recognize that Jesus really does love them. Jesus loves everyone. This goes back to the argument about who the real chosen people are. There were Jewish groups who thought they were it, they, and they alone, were chosen by God. But God had called the Jews to be a light to the Gentiles. When they didn't do that, God still chose Gentiles. God is showing that He does love them.
- 2 They will be kept from the hour of trial (3:10)
 - a. We see the idea of a time of trial here in verse 10. They have kept the Word of Jesus in persevering, so Jesus will also take care of them and keep them from the time of trial.
 - b. Scholars debate whether this means the tribulation period as we think of and this means that Jesus will take them up to be with Him. 1 Thess. 4:16-18 is a reference to the tribulation period: *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*
 - c. It appears to me that this verse leads us to believe that Jesus will take us up with Him. But this may not have to do with the 7 year tribulation period. Christians have been persecuted through the years and continue to be and Jesus tells us to patiently endure.
 - d. Regardless of what this means—this church is called to patiently endure.
 - e. Sometimes hard time can help us grow:

The albatross, a majestic seabird with the longest wingspan of any bird, spends eighteen months at sea, touching down only on water, losing their ability to make smooth earth-landings.

Returning to nest and lay eggs, they come in like drunken sailors, tumbling, skidding, crashing, earning these regal birds the epithet gooney birds.

These powerful seabirds spread enormous wings, sometimes reaching an eleven-foot span, and glide above turbulent seas. They need storm-strong wind currents to keep them aloft. In calm seas, they are virtually unable to get airborne. Consistently smooth weather conditions prevent albatross migration from the Southern Hemisphere.

Storms will come for us, too. Like the albatross, we need the storms. Our intended wing, our high desire for God, will be tested and developed in strong winds and troubled waters. I eagerly expect and hope that God will enable me to ride the turbulence and learn the currents of grace. Riding on currents of grace doesn't preclude stumbles, skids, or nosedives. Though I want to soar, maybe God will make me, like the albatross, fruitful even after a crash landing.³

- 3 They will become pillars in the Temple of God (3:12a).
 - a. In beginning of verse 12 they are told that they will be Pillars in the Temple of God.
 - b. Now, this is after verse 11 which tells them to hold fast.
 - c. They must stay the course and then they will be a pillar in the new temple.
 - d. Think about this it was common in their day for names to be inscribed in the pillars in the temples. But in this case, they will be the pillars. This means that they will be a part of the temple. They will never leave the temple. That is awesome.
 - e. But this is more than that. In Revelation 21 we find out that there is no temple in the New Jerusalem. This is because the whole city is the holy of Holies. How can you see the Temple when you are in it? They are in the Temple, they are pillars of the Temple, they are always in the Holy of Holies.
- 4 They will be given new names (3:12b–13)
 - a. This is awesome.
 - b. A name had to do with who one was. This has to do with belonging to God and the new Jerusalem.
 - c. When they patiently endure they are awarded with God's presence and service as priests. (Rev. 1:6) In chapter one they are called to be priests. They are awarded with forever presence in the new Jerusalem.
- 5 Last details: there is a lot in this passage that I did not reference.
 - a. In Rev. 3:7-8 we find out about Jesus and that He can open and no one can shut and He can shut what no one can open. Remember in Revelation 1:18 Jesus said that He has the keys to death and hades.
 - b. This is saying that Jesus can bring them out of fallen Babylon. Jesus can bring them to the New Jerusalem. We are saved from the fallen Babylon. Jesus has the keys of David. This could be a reference to the eternal throne of David. But also a reference to Isaiah 22:22: *I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*
 - c. Jesus has all authority (Matt. 28:18).
 - d. In verse 10: The end of the verse: "Those who dwell upon the earth." This phrase will be used again. At this point it is just introduced. Later on in chapter 15 it is those that worship the beast. Those that are on the earth are citizens of fallen Babylon, but citizens of the New Jerusalem are redeemed out of fallen Babylon.
 - e. In verse 10: The hour of trial is coming upon the whole earth.
 - f. Fallen Babylon is tested against that reality
 - g. Coming soon:
 - h. Hold fast to what you have so that no one will see your crown.
 - i. We will understand "soon" somewhat differently than then.

³ Adapted from Jean Fleming, *Pursue the Intentional Life* (NavPress, 2013), page 44

- j. "I am coming exactly at the right moment, whenever that is, not a minute early or late."
- k. So, that no one will seize your crown.
- l. This is the first time he uses this crown.
- m. The word for crown is the crown that princes wear, later another GK word for the crown that the King wears (Diadem).
- n. This is the crown of life we find out later on.
- o. The one who is conquering--- this is not "If you conquer"
- p. As long as you keep on conquering you will never go out of the temple, but if you don't...

Patient perseverance, we must also persevere and stick with Jesus.

In her book, *A Place of Healing*, author Joni Eareckson Tada reflects on "normal": "Relief from chronic pain—even though I remain paralyzed—would be blissfully, peacefully, joyously 'normal' for me these days ... and all I could ask for. I don't remember where I saw the following Mary Jane Iron quote, but it comes pretty close to my take on 'normal':

Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are ... Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow. One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in my pillow, or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky and want, more than all the world, your return.

Joni continues, "That's my take on normal. Come to think of it, I'm not even a 'normal' quad. I have now exceeded the expected lifespan of a person with my level of injury and paralysis. The bare, unadorned fact is this: Many people in my condition simply don't live as long as I have lived. So my thoughts haven't been so much on picking up the old life on my feet I left behind in 1967, as much as stepping into the new life and body that await me."⁴

How is that for perseverance?

You know what? She served the Lord that whole time as well. Can we?

⁴ Joni Eareckson Tada, *[A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God's Sovereignty](#)* (David C. Cook, 2010), p. 38; submitted by Van Morris, Mt. Washington, Kentucky