



WOW: Word of the Week

Endurance

April 29, 2020

I am thinking about Hebrews 12:1-2: "let us run with endurance, looking to Jesus." We are wonderfully capable of self-deception, often preoccupied with the wrong things. It is not easy to run with endurance.

I would like to use another word. Endurance is tough. Perseverance no better. Some translations say patience, but that is not what it really is. It is endurance. My mother called it "stick-to-it-tiveness." Staying in there, get up and go, every day, day after day. We enjoy those wonderful times when what we want to do and what we have to do are the same. But most of time what we want to do and what we have to do, they do not coincide, and that's endurance.

Endurance is especially difficult in a culture enamored with feeling. "How did you feel about it?" Well, I didn't feel like it. Why weren't you there? I didn't feel like it. In a preaching class, I handed out random scripture texts to the students, asking them to prepare a sermon on the text. One student looked at his text, flipped through his Bible, read the passage, and came back to ask, "Can I have another one?"

I asked, "What's wrong with that one?" He said, "Well, I read it and didn't feel anything," to which I replied, "Well, take it home and get to feeling something because that is your assignment."

I remember first time the church leaders asked me to preach on a specific text. I was terrified. How do you preach on a specific text? I had been to school four years, graduated with a degree in Bible. I learned something. I have seen it reinforced across 50+ years. Many preachers are not enduring, they are taking the easy way out, preaching on whatever they feel like, not on what the church needs to hear, not on what God wants to say. Large sections of important biblical texts are never preached, because itching ears do not want to hear. Many people want the reward first, they want to feel good.

I am back to my word—endurance. What makes world go around, what makes the church work, what keeps everything going, is endurance. Jan rushes around, cleans house, it looks great. I ask her why she is doing that? She says, "Every time I see a vacuum, I get that feeling, I am moved, I am thrilled." No. She reminds me that I invited company, she doesn't want them to see house like this, get out of the way.

A professor grades papers late, a preacher is back at the office late into the night, or at the building on his day off, up early, staying up late, why? These are not about racing pulse and throbbing heart. This is endurance.

A number of years ago, after a particularly draining time in ministry, Sunday night, 7:15 P.M. Sermon preached, building emptied. "Jan, can you drive home?" You have to understand that when we go somewhere together, she never drives, I always drive. We get home, my temperature is 104. I did not know I was sick. Endurance makes the world go round.

Run with endurance, looking to Jesus. It is easier to look around, easier to look at everything else. All are interested in marketing, what is popular, what do people want? There is a world of difference between what people think they want and what they need. "Looking to Jesus...."

When some people find Jesus, they start mentioning him often, but their lives are no different. "Looking to Jesus." What does that mean? He is the model, the pioneer, the trailblazer, the forerunner. He provides strength for the journey, forgiveness and fortitude. He is our example of endurance. He is our power for endurance.

Excerpted from my sermon, "Communicating the Message of Hebrews in Today's World," available at <http://www.bobyoungrsources.com/sermons/19-hebrews.htm>