



## **WOW: Word Of the Week**

### **Endurance**

**October 5, 2022**

If you grew up in the U.S., you have been influenced by a culture that exalts self-protection and seeks a pain-free, trouble-free existence. When that doesn't occur, people tend to engage in pity-parties, blame others, and blame the system. Christians are not immune. Too much self-focus leaves little time or energy for serving others.

The Bible message leads believers to a different life and lifestyle. Taking up one's cross suggests stress, danger, suffering, even death. The gospel sounded forth in the first century despite extreme persecution. Jesus promised, "in the world you will have tribulation." Paul wrote that "all who want to live godly in Christ will be persecuted" and that "we are called to share in his suffering."

Paul knew that following Christ meant bearing the marks of service, sacrifice, and suffering. Jesus came as a model of service and sacrifice. Following Jesus means that personal comforts are sacrificed. Time, energy, and resources spent in serving others will cut into the great American expectation of leisure time, recreation, and self-pleasures (travel, vacations, entertainment, ever-nicer possessions). Somewhere along the line, at least in many parts of the West, the message of Scripture has been twisted. We quickly pass over certain texts as not applicable to us today. Dying—yet living. Sorrowful—yet rejoicing. Having nothing—yet possessing everything.

This long introduction has not been fun. If you are still on board—thank you for sticking with me for a less than enjoyable look at ourselves.

Endurance! What the Bible says about endurance provides us the key! How do we escape cultural influences that would serve self first? How do we take up our crosses? How can we seek to share the pain and suffering of others as we love and serve? We need endurance. If we endure, we will reign with him. We share Christ if we hold firm confidence to the end. Stand firm. Do not grow weary. Hold firm and never let go of hope. Rejoice in trials. Be steadfast, stand the test, God's promise is secure.

Yes, the Christian life is hard. Narrow gate, hard path. The Word of God within us is easily choked out. Jesus' parable speaks to discipleship, not only to evangelism.

A friend, former student, recently shared this quotation from Rory Vaden: "The amount of your endurance, and the intensity of your focus, is directly proportionate to the clarity of your vision." There it is. Clarity of vision. Can we see? Can we see clearly? God's work in this world, His eternal purpose, saving purpose, His explanation of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and exaltation. Until our vision of God's purpose is clear, endurance will be difficult and often elude us. Ease will take precedence over following Jesus' example of service and sacrifice.