

Power to Endure

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the necessity of spiritual strength and prayer for enduring the challenges of the Christian life.

Duration: 31:25

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:9-14

Topics: "Enduring"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal stories and analogies to emphasize the importance of not giving up in the face of challenges. He recalls his experience as a basketball player and how his coach would push them to their limits to build endurance and resilience. The speaker also mentions the parable of the seeds falling on shallow ground, highlighting the danger of lacking depth in one's faith. He encourages the audience to persevere and not let fatigue or difficulties make them lose sight of their faith and commitment to God.

Transcript

How many have a Bible with you today? Hold up your Bible if you have a Bible. Everyone ought to bring their Bible to church, and we're gonna read from it. Our text today is from Colossians.

Listen to this prayer. For this reason, since the day we've heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will. Remember what I told you before? The knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And we pray this in order, why? That you may live a life worthy of the Lord, remember? And may please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened, verse 11, with all power, according to His glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. The problem in America is, right now I hear from the people in Biblica. Biblica are the people who own the rights to the NIV translation, that a recent survey shows that 1,200 people every day in America stop reading the Bible, 1,200 people.

And in church, less and less Bible is being referred to. People are preaching their opinions instead of the Word of God. And we don't treasure the Bible.

Even some of you, you might own those Bibles, but owning a Bible and reading a Bible are two different things. If we would read the Bible and listen to God as much as we receive text messages all day, we'd be a Bible-memorized people, wouldn't we? Let's pray that God will hold this word dear to our hearts, amen, and that we'll read it every single day, every single day of our lives. This is the bread of life that God has given us.

Let's just look at that passage that I read before. I wanna highlight one part of it to you before I just give you two little thoughts. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we've not stopped praying for you.

So the context now is this is a prayer. And asking God to fill you, he's telling now how we prayed. With the knowledge of his will, through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Here's the verse now. Being strengthened with all power.

Now strengthened and power, it's a variation of the same Greek word. It would be like this, strengthened with all strength or made powerful with all power. It's the word *dunamis* in the Greek where we get the word dynamite.

So being strengthened with all dynamite-like power according to his dynamite might, the power of his glory when he manifests him, that's how great the measuring rod Paul's using here. My goodness, being strengthened with not some power but with all power. Every kind of power that God can give you by his spirit.

According to his glorious might, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Why? So that you would think we're gonna climb a mountain, do Mount Everest, we're gonna do a crawl on our knees, cross gravel for 10 miles. No, so that you may have great endurance and patience and have it with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Now in the New Testament, there's a couple different forms of language or literature less than what's in the Old Testament. Old Testament has more poetry, Proverbs, Psalms, Ecclesiastes is different, Song of Solomon is a totally different kind of book. Then you have the history of Genesis, Exodus, then you have the giving of laws, you have prophetic writing, you have psalms, you have songs, wise adages like Proverbs.

In the New Testament, basically what you have are historical books, historical narrative, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the life of Christ, then Acts, the historical narrative of the early church, and then for the most part, the rest of it are letters that were written from an apostle to a church, Paul to Corinth, Paul to Ephesus, Peter, James, John, Jude writing their letters, and then of course you have Revelation which is an apocalyptic type of literature with a lot of symbolism in it and very difficult imagery to decipher. But one of the things that are in Paul's letters, oddly for us, is that God not only inspired him to say things like, now endureth faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love. But beyond that statement, what he also includes, God includes, are prayers.

You have the content of his prayers. When God inspired Paul to write these letters, he inspired him to tell the people how he prayed for them. That does two things for us.

It encourages us about the power of prayer. There are certain things that can be taught. Other things only come by my contact with God through prayer, praise, worship, thanksgiving, and waiting receptively for God.

You can't teach someone to be like Christ. It has to be done by the Holy Spirit imparted in times of communion with God. This is why Jesus failed as a discipler.

He was with the disciples for three years, but at the end, what did he have? The minute he was arrested, they all fled, and Peter denied he even knew him and cursed while he was doing it. So obviously, teaching alone will not do it. The genius of the gospel is that we have teachers and pastors and all of that, but we have access at the throne of grace to God and the power that we need on a daily basis.

All are with me, say amen. Amen. So these prayers are in the Bible also to show us what are the kinds of things that they prayed about back in that day, and do we pray like that? Because whatever the Holy Spirit put in the New Testament as prayer content, it must be very important, or else the Holy Spirit wouldn't have put it in there.

You don't find any prayers in there, and I'm hoping you'll trade in that old Chevy that you have and get that new Mercedes that's just out. You don't find anything like that. We pray like that.

They had their mind on other things. So now we have a prayer. So we're gonna ask ourselves, well, my goodness, what's the subject matter of this prayer? Do we pray like this? But better yet, what are the lessons for us today? It'll be very brief because we're gonna pray.

Well, the introduction of it is very stupendous, and I'm praying, I can't teach you this, I gotta pray that God will do this. I'm praying that you might be strengthened with all kinds of strength, that you might be empowered by all kinds of empowerment, notice the all, every kind of strength and power that you need in the inward person, that's what I'm praying God will give you through the Holy Spirit. And the measuring rod of it is even in keeping with the might of his glory or the power associated when God manifests himself, and that is so strong that when John saw a revelation of the Lord, he felt as if he was dead.

So Paul's asking for something stupendous. I want God to visit you and empower you where you really live, inside. And I'm praying that he might strengthen you and empower you and lift you above your meager resources.

Wow, Paul, for what? For, you know, to prophesy, to be used in the gifts of the Spirit, to heal somebody, to write a book that will bless others? No, he says no. Right now, I'm talking about what you really need the most, that you might be empowered with all power so that you might have endurance and patience and have it joyfully, that you might have the endurance that helps you persevere because it's hard being a Christian. And when you run out of gas, you get in trouble.

Now, the tense of that verb, that you might be empowered, is in kind of a continual present tense. In other words, you don't go to the gas station and get filled up when you're 20 years old and then live for the next 10 years off of something God gave you when you were 20. If you try to do that, you're gonna end up in a heap of trouble.

This is a continual dispensing by God's Spirit into your soul so that you might have perseverance. You know what perseverance is. It's the ability to keep going despite obstacles, disappointments, temptations, trials, tribulation, the bottom falling out of your plans, attacks of the devil, not everybody makes it through

that.

This word endurance is never used of God. The other word patience we'll see is, but this is only connected with human behavior. Paul is saying, I want you to have endurance.

You remember what Jesus said, same word. He said, now I'm sending you out as my disciples. All men will hate you because of my namesake.

Everyone's gonna hate you. What a thing to tell your disciples, but it's true. We're living through it more and more right here in this country.

You can say you're anything and they'll applaud. Say you're a Christian and they'll come after you. You can do anything in school except pray and mention Christ.

You can foist any kind of perverse behavior, every kind of weird thing, glorify drugs, glorify any kind of thing, and they'll say, oh, tell us more, let's not judge. But anybody say they're a Christian, whammo, they're coming. How many know what I'm talking about? Say amen.

Right now in this city, you can't get a park like you used to, a band shell, do a concert. We try to get Prospect Park to have an afternoon meeting with you all and the choir and concert, try to get the gospel out to other people. Sunset Park and all of that, no, no, no, no, no.

Denied, denied, denied, denied, denied. We don't do that anymore. Now if it was a rap concert and somebody had money and they were cursing every other word and demeaning women, yeah, let's do that.

It'll strengthen the cultural roots of the city. But what you need when everyone's hating you and against you, you need perseverance. You need endurance.

It's not who starts the race that wins the prize. Hebrews 12 says, so let us run with perseverance, the race set before us. Same word, let us run with endurance.

Why? Because if it's a five-mile race, you can run great for four miles. If you drop out, you get nothing, you lose. You get no crown at the end.

That's why Jesus said, there all men are gonna hate you, but he that endures to the end shall be saved. It's not starting, it's finishing. Come on, we've all started here.

Now we gotta pray for each other that we finish. Oh no, God will take care of that. That's not what the Bible says.

The Bible says God will take care of that if we look to him for perseverance. Why didn't Paul just say, I'm not praying about any of you because since you started, you're gonna finish? No, I'm praying for you that you will have perseverance because there's disappointments in life. You know what it takes to resist Satan and temptation and make it through difficult situations when the bottom falls out? You know, we all understand how the body works, don't we? To refer back to those years ago when I was recruited by the Naval Academy to play basketball there, it was plebe summer, lots of challenges, rope climbing, swimming, they throw you off of a high, high, high diving board into a pool and you gotta swim for 40 minutes, I think it is, with nobody helping you and a lot of stuff like that.

But when basketball practice came, my goodness, I ended up being the captain of that team and much to my surprise, the first two days of practice, the coach put all the basketballs away. How are you gonna have basketball practice without basketball? What am I gonna dribble? What am I gonna shoot? He said, no, everybody get into position, come on, defensive position, and slide across and run and do the lines back and forth and we're huffing and puffing and guys are doubling over and some guys are getting sick on the sideline and running and he said, you know why I'm doing this? Because what is it, how good you dribble and how good you shoot, if you run out of gas, there's a sign in the locker room, fatigue makes cowards of us all. Listen, fatigue makes cowards of us all.

In football, in tennis, in basketball, when you get fatigued and you're tired, you do things that don't make sense. You take chances, you cut corners, you shoot a shot you shouldn't shoot. Why, because you're tired.

Let me just hoist this thing up here. Why guys miss foul shots that they could make during practice is at the end of the game, their body is, and your legs are not the same and when you stand, you don't crouch the way you should. You don't follow through, why? Because of fatigue.

So he said, we're going to be the best conditioned team that we play. No one's going to out-condition us because fatigue makes cowards of us all because exerting, playing, dribbling, sweating. At the University of Rhode Island where I played, I played a game at Fordham in my sophomore, junior year and I was the point guard and it went into overtime or double overtime and I played the whole game.

I lost seven to eight pounds of water and at the end of the game, I was so dehydrated, I got out of nowhere, just running down the court, I got a cramp in my calf and went down like somebody shot me. And they said, what happened? Did somebody shoot him? And I was down there holding my leg, nobody knew what was wrong. It was just a cramp because just stuff happens when you're under stress.

Now that's physical, we all understand it. Well, how about spiritually? You fight the devil, the bottom falls out, you're disappointed, you get tempted, you resist the devil. What do you think, resisting the devil's easy? Resisting the devil's hard.

It takes spiritual energy, has nothing to do with your vitamins, has nothing to do, do you pump iron, do you work out? You can be in tremendous physical condition and be flabby and on life support spiritually. You can be a pushover for the enemy. Inside, we all have a spiritual strength, that's why Paul prays.

I pray that you might be strengthened with all kinds of strength, why? So you can endure. It's not easy to endure as a Christian. You get discouraged.

And when you run out of gas, you wanna quit. I wanna declare to all of you today, don't quit. Do you hear me up in the balcony? Do not quit.

It's always too soon to quit. Come on, let's say amen. I got so discouraged when I was in the ministry.

No people, no money, rundown building, no training, formal training in the ministry. Every kind of crazy thing happening, trying to figure out what to do. Everything, the talk of the town, you have just a handful of people that it grew to.

My wife finally started a choir, nine voices. Then one of the tenors got one of the altos pregnant. They both had to step down and went from nine to seven.

Everyone knew that. When you only got nine voices and you're down to seven, everyone's saying, what happened there? Everyone's buzzing. You're trying to keep their minds on the Lord.

Everybody's just yapping about something. I got so discouraged, I tried twice to quit the ministry. I'm only in the ministry today because God blocked both those efforts.

Listen, but you know why I tried to quit? I tried to quit because I was tired. Because when you get tired, you wanna throw up your hands and quit. Some get tired, they just let the flesh, why resist the devil? Why fight sin? I don't understand what's going on, so I'm just gonna let it all hang out.

Walk this narrow way, resist the devil, and he'll flee from you. Try to be more like Christ every day. I'm tired of that.

And the devil whispers, and you have a right to be tired. Come on, how many know I'm not talking foolishness? Come on, how many can say you know exactly what I'm talking about? But Paul is praying that you might be strengthened because you gotta keep going. Listen, you can't just start.

You gotta persevere. You can't just start singing in the choir. You gotta do it every week.

Anybody can start. Remember some of the seeds that fell on shallow ground? Plants sprung up, but when the sun came up and the heat came, and they asked our master, our Lord, what does that mean? He said those are those, those are the people who receive the word of God, but they're shallow, they don't have much depth. It's rocky soil.

And when persecution comes, they cave. Listen, not everyone who's sung in this choir, see all these people singing? Not everyone over the years who's sung in the choir. We had a guy leave choir, backslide, run out of gas, not serve the Lord, and started working in a male porno theater on 8th Avenue around 46th Street.

I went after him there, trying to talk to him. He wouldn't wanna listen. No, this is, no one knows the battles that we're going through and the way we're made.

When was the last time you ever heard anyone honest enough to say, hey, Brother Deacon Everton, Julia, would you please pray for me? I need endurance because I'm starting to lose my grip. No, you can't say that to anyone. People might look at you and go, what's wrong with you? But the truth is, we've almost all lost our grip.

I've learned this. I've met some of the most famous men and women of God, and I found out that all of us have, at one time or another, been hanging by just one little thread. If you affirm that, just say an amen.

And why? Because we've run out of gas. So Paul says every day, you have to be strengthened. You gotta pray for each other.

You can't teach this. Pastors can't do this for you. You can have the apostle Paul over you.

That wouldn't help. He's telling them, I can't teach you to endure. The Holy Spirit has to give you strength to endure.

Just like you need physical strength, you need spiritual strength. You know, last night, oddly, I lay in my bed, and I'm reminded of it now, so I take it that the Holy Spirit wants me to do this. I lay in bed and started

weeping for no reason.

And I felt like, I saw myself preaching here, and I felt like up there in that part of the balcony, there would be somebody just ready to quit today. And God told me, tell him quick, don't preach long. Tell him quick.

Tell him quickly, don't quit. Let us pray for you. God will help you.

He'll fill your tank. You're not gonna go under. You're gonna go over.

You're gonna make it. But don't quit. Listen.

Listen. If you're here in the balcony or downstairs, and you're in that kind of situation, I'm not done, I only have a couple minutes left, but you come right now. You come right now.

Anybody here at their wits' end, ready to just say, I cannot go on anymore? I cannot go on. You get out of your seat, you come up here. I'll pray for you.

Now look at me, everybody. Don't be distracted. Paul says you not only have to be strengthened for endurance, you know what you have to be strengthened for? Patience.

Now endurance has to do with circumstances and situations. But you know what patience has to do with? People. It's a word that means forbear.

Come on, walk across here. You're gonna make it. Look at me, you're gonna make it.

You're gonna make it. Come on, stand over here. You're gonna make it, you're gonna make it.

You're gonna make it, my friend. I don't care what happened. I don't care if all hell breaks loose.

You're gonna persevere. Ma'am, look at me. Now endurance has to do with circumstances.

Patience has to do with the ability that God has to give us not to react against people and blow up and vent and explode. Circumstances tend to make you get discouraged and wanna quit. But if you don't have patience with people, you will blow up, lose your testimony, give in to bitterness, give in to anger, and have an edge the rest of your life.

And only God can keep you from it. You're gonna make it. You got something, he's wearing a Superman sweatshirt.

You got something better than Superman who's gonna help you. How about that? The Lord Jesus Christ is gonna help you. You're gonna make it, you're gonna make it.

Listen, patience is the ability to have long suffering with people like the Lord has had with you and me. Isn't it amazing? The Lord's put up with so much from you and me, but when people let us down or act obnoxious, we wanna vent and go off. And some of you here, you're holding stuff for years, for years, and it'll weaken you, and it'll give a place to the enemy.

You gotta let it go. Leave him with God. Let God fight your battles.

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. You say to me, Pastor Cimbala, you don't know who molested me when I was 10 years old. You don't know what debt went down in my life.

Easy for you to say. I do not know that. And you don't know how I grew up.

And my dad was an alcoholic for 22 years. He never made it to my wedding. He beat me so bad sometimes that that's how I found out he was drinking.

I went to my brother and said, my father beat me, dad beat me, but I never got a beating like that. What was that about? And my brother told me, he's drinking, Jim. I was 11 or 12 years old.

And I went to the place, my brother heard him hiding the liquor, and I went and took the bottle down. My brother was scared. I took the bottle and poured it out.

Because my father would never say, who poured out my liquor? Because he was hiding everything. I was pouring out bottles every single week, every single month. But if somebody says to me, oh, you don't know what it is to cry yourself to sleep at night? Yeah, I do.

Couldn't even have a friend in my house. Look at me, I couldn't bring one friend to my house. My mother's here, she knows it.

Couldn't bring one friend to my house because my father might be a lunatic. Couldn't bring one person to my house. Never made it to my wedding.

But if I don't let God give me mercy for him, and he's gone now to be with the Lord. The Lord brought him back. But if God didn't give me mercy and patience for him and long suffering, I'd be some bitter statistic telling people you don't know what I've been through.

You meet those by the thousands. But God is bigger than what anybody's ever done to us. Come on, can we say amen to that? Now, this endurance with circumstances, patience with people, long suffering with people, putting up with obnoxious, nasty people.

That's what Paul prayed for. Only the Holy Spirit will help us to do that. It's not in you and me, because you and me, we will just react.

I just meet some people some days, and I'm not in the spirit. Come on, am I the only one here? But praise God, he keeps us from that. Because like a lamb led to the slaughter, he opened up not his mouth.

When they were mocking him and spitting at him and all of that, he was praying for them. And if he can do that, he can give us the power to do that. Instead of cursing people, we can pray for them.

Anybody here just torn up inside and you're battling, you don't have patience with people or with one particular person who is just gouging you, hurting you, stepping on you every day. I'm telling you, the only answer is God. If you don't give it to God, that person will eat your lunch.

It'll rob you spiritually. You come right now. But you don't know what he did to me.

I don't, but what can I tell you? I'm giving you the Bible here. Lastly, the Bible says that we might have all perseverance, that's circumstances, endure, keep running. We're not giving up.

Come on, do I get an amen? We're not giving up. We not just started the race, we're gonna finish the race. Patience with people.

We're not gonna be bitter. We're not gonna vent and go crazy. We're not gonna do that.

God's gonna hold us and give us mercy over people. Mercy over people. He gave me tears for my father. He gave me tears last night for someone here. I don't know who you are. I wept like I was shook in my bed with joy.

Some people persevere like this. All right, I'll persevere. Arr.

What are you doing? I'm persevering. Arr. Not like that.

We're gonna do it with joy. Pass him by, I can't do that. I know you can't.

But strengthen with all strength by the Holy Spirit. With all power. He can not only help you persevere, you'll do it with strength.

And you won't be like this with people. All right, I forgive you. I never wanna see you again, but I forgive you.

No, no. You're gonna be with joy, thanking God. Because guess what? Whoever hurt you, ma'am, look at me.

Whoever hurt you, they can never take Jesus from you. You have Jesus. And what do they have? What do they have? These people who did these ugly things or these circumstances, what do they have left? They have nothing.

They have nothing. We have Christ. We're gonna make it.

Put down your sack and your jacket and whatever you have here. Let's all close our eyes. Anybody else before we pray? Pastor Cimbala, for me, you read my mail.

This is the word I need to hear. The enemy's trying to get me to quit, give up. Stop coming to church.

Stop reading the word. Stop praying. I will not.

I will persevere. The spirit of the living God will strengthen me and I will keep going even though my heart is broken and tears are in my eyes. I will keep running the race.

God, by his spirit, will give me patience. I'll be able to bless those that curse me. I'll pray for those who have just spit on me.

Behind my back, they hurt me. But I will not give in to that because then I'll be the loser. No, joyfully, I'm gonna love them.

Oh, pastor, I can't do that. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. You can do it.

Father, we're coming to you in the name of Jesus. When there's a different faith coming, You see all the people, not just in the front, but up in the balcony, downstairs, across the street. You know all things.

You know all the tests, the trials, the difficulties, the rejections, the disappointments, the temptations, the situations that just seem to just shake, rattle and roll our lives constantly. And our eyes are toward you, God, we can't make it without your strength. But you promised that you who have begun a good work would complete it.

And we recognize our need of fresh grace today, fresh power, fresh strength, so that we might endure. I pray also, God, that you would give us that ability to have patience with people. People who have hurt us, trampled on us, hurt us 20 years ago, hurt us 20 hours ago.

That the devil will not use that to pull us down and weaken us. But that we might be like you, long-suffering. And God, we're testimonies of how patient you are.

Who of us would be here if you would just explode at people who mess up? Because we've all messed up. All we like sheep have gone astray. But since we've been Christians, God, we have failed you and yet you remain faithful to us.

You're so tender, you're so merciful, you're patient. And now we claim that strength. We're not going to live with bitterness.

Not going to live with unforgiveness. Not going to live with resentment. We're not going to give in to this plague of anger going around this country and world.

We're going to be sweet through Jesus Christ. We're going to be joyfully giving thanks, even though there's problems all around us. I thank you, Lord, for everyone here in this room who is opening their heart.

Give us peace today.

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