

Training in God's Gym

Our life on Earth is a life of seasons, a life of changes. Just as some seasons are eagerly awaited and others are less happily anticipated because they are not as pleasant, so some changes life brings are welcome and others are dreaded because they are difficult, harsh and painful.

The thing that keeps us pressing on in the midst of changes, both good and bad, is the belief that God is in full control of His world and that "He [makes] everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl. 3:11, NKJV). No matter what may come our way, we have a promise of beauty!

But only God in His eternal wisdom knows how the transformation will unfold and when it will take place. He does His work as we learn to live in obedience and contentment, trusting Him, believing that He will bring us through every season of sorrow and pain into a beautiful reward.

His Word assures us, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). We can count on this. But what are we to do while the night season remains?

The answer is, ENDURE. "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36). "Endurance" is the ability to keep pressing on without

growing weary. It is stamina, forbearance, courage, fortitude, durability and ability to stand.

But Biblical endurance is more than just being the last man to stand. Derived from the Greek word "hupomone," which means cheerful endurance or hopeful waiting, biblical endurance speaks to the attitude with which we wait as much as it does to the act of waiting itself. It is more than just making it across the finish line; it is the outlook we maintain while we run the race.

Cheerful endurance is a powerful attitude that says, "God not only CAN change my circumstances; He WILL!" It is a mind-set that is filled with compelling confidence, trust, expectation, optimism and assurance in Christ. Hopeful waiting and cheerful endurance will not allow us to give up our dreams or turn loose of our hope; instead they call us to a deeper level of faith.

So how do we gain such endurance? The answer is not easy to accept. The Bible clearly says that the trying and testing of our faith produces endurance (see James 1:3).

Testing is the weight of choice that God uses to develop our spiritual muscles and internal stamina. When we face a trial that threatens our faith; when we find ourselves in circumstances that are incompatible with

what we believe, we
are in God's gym. It is then that we have the opportunity to
build our
endurance.

The resistance we feel can serve us in that moment. If we
begin to lift the
weight up off ourselves with prayer, singing, meditation and
obedient
responses, we will bench-press our way into cheerful
endurance. The joy that
comes from passing a test, knowing that we have honored God in
our lives, is
incomparable.

But what if we do not respond properly to God's "no pain, no
gain"
training program? What happens to our endurance if these
weights remain upon
us? The result of that condition is obvious. Trying to run a
race while
encumbered with weights would leave us exhausted, depressed
and drained. Yet
many of us do exactly that and then are perplexed at why our
progress is so
slow.

Instead, we must rise up in faith, as the apostle Paul
admonishes us to do:
"Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially
the sin that
so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance
the race that God
has set before us" ().

The scripture says that WE are to throw off the weights. We
must lay them down;
we must rid ourselves of them because they are

counterproductive to our
endurance.

We are not supposed to tolerate the weight of fear, failure,
bitterness or
unforgiveness, or the heaviness of Satan's lies. We must press
against these
weights, lift them off and grow in cheerful endurance!

Is God calling you to joyful endurance? Is He calling you to a
new level of
faith? Do you need a fresh, dynamic, flourishing and hopeful
expectation in
God? Have you lost your hope that anything beautiful can come
out of your life,
your circumstances, your relationships, or your dreams?

Then get to God's gym. Start working out your salvation. There
IS hope for a
better tomorrow because you have a promise of beauty! Throw
off the old weights
and start running with endurance. You'll be amazed at the
results!