

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

- Acts 26:17-18

Paul's mission was to reach the Gentiles with the Word of God. Paul was appointed and empowered to do this by God, but Satan, the lion, would attack all of Paul's efforts. Just as the birds in the parable of the sower came immediately to steal the seed of the Word that was scattered on the road (Matt. 13:4, 19), so Satan would try to destroy, intimidate, censor, discourage, and stifle the seeds of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Paul had plenty to fear in the natural world - including confinement in the Mamertine Prison, intimidation in the presence of Emperor Nero's court, execution, and much more.

All of these evil attacks were real and designed by the prowling lion, Satan, to make Paul quit proclaiming the message of salvation to the Gentile world. Paul was a strong-willed man before he became a believer and remained so after he placed faith in Christ. But Paul's human strength and determination by themselves would collapse under the pressure of the spiritual forces of evil. Paul needed a place of protection and support. Paul needed to abide in God's rest.

In this place of rest, the fortress of Paul's soul would be unconquerable no matter what kind of evil attack he was subjected to. And, from that same place of rest, Paul would be able to launch a counter attack by fully proclaiming to everyone in Nero's court the knowledge of God.

In this way Paul would be tearing down strongholds in the minds of the Gentiles who heard his words. The arguments and high

thoughts of evil that stood opposed to the knowledge of God would begin to crumble. The Lord stood by Paul's side and delivered Paul from every evil attack by giving him confidence, endurance, and fearlessness in the face of evil. Because of this, the Lord's message was fully proclaimed to begin tearing down the strong towers of false philosophies and corrupt realities that evil had built in the souls of the Gentiles.

#5 – ENDURANCE (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Hebrews 12:1-2

Each of us is called by the Lord to “run...the race that is set before us”. Jeremiah's ministry was compared to a race (Jer. 12:5), and Jesus himself had a race to run that included going to the Cross. Before Jesus went to his Cross he had told his disciples, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*” (Matt. 16:24).

To successfully “run..the race marked out for us”, and to “take up our cross” we will need endurance. Even Jesus is said to have “endured the cross.” We will also have to endure, so that we might take up our own cross and finish our race.

The word used twice in Hebrews 12:1-2 for “endurance” (“run with endurance”) and “endured” (“endured the cross”) is *hupomone* in the Greek. The word *hupomone* means “a remaining behind” and “a patient endurance.” The idea of this word is to hold your ground

even when everyone else retreats - and to continue under the load, continuing the work until it is finished.

While running the race of faith, opposition and struggles to overcome are guaranteed. To finish his work of the Cross, we are told that Jesus had to “despise the shame” of the temporal situation that was crushing in on the strong tower in his soul. Jesus endured the shame of the Cross because in the fortress of his soul he had the knowledge of God that continually revealed to him the fullness of joy that awaited him on the other side.

We are told to consider Jesus as we struggle to endure the race set before us, because Jesus is an example of how to face difficulties and endure to the end by understanding the promise of future joy and glory. There are two additional pieces of knowledge in Christ that will empower us to secure our place in God’s rest while we endure and finish our race.

The first is that Jesus is the “founder” of our faith. The word “founder” comes from the Greek word *archegos* meaning “originator”, “author”, or “leader”. The word *archegos* is a compound word in the Greek made from two words: *arxe* meaning “the first” and *ago* meaning “to lead”. Together *arxe-ago* literally means “the first to lead”. This word identifies the first in a long line of followers. The *archegos* is the person who begins the trail or the movement. Jesus is the one who established the race we are running and is the one who set us on the race course. He himself has already run the course, cleared the path, and won the race. Now we are following his path, and it is one that leads us also to victory - but only if we endure, stay on course, and finish the race.

The second is the second word used to describe Jesus, identifying him as the “perfecter” of our faith. The Greek word for “perfecter” is *teleiotes* meaning “a completer” and “a finisher”. Jesus has victoriously

completed the race, and he reaches back to empower us to do likewise. To access the power he offers us, we need to continue to endure.

So, we see that Jesus has established the course, cleared the way, endured the shame, finished the race, and now holds the key to victory. And having done it himself, he now sets us on that same course and has empowered us to finish for the same victory. We only need to endure - which means we need to continue running even when others stop. We must remain at work and carry the load until the job is finished.

Endurance is not listed specifically as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, but it is something we can attain in the place of rest as we trust the knowledge of God. Just as you can increase your physical running endurance with training, running races and testing your progress, so steadfastly running “with endurance the race marked out for us” in God’s plan and purpose will continue to produce more and more spiritual endurance (*hupomone*) in us.

Endurance is the ability to maintain concentration and remain in God’s rest as we continually trust him. This is exactly what James says:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (Greek: hupomone).

- James 1:2-3

As you remain at rest, trusting the Lord, the testing of your faith will produce more and more endurance, which will then enable you to continue to wait in faith for the Lord even more. Not only does the testing of your faith increase your ability to use your faith, it also proves the genuineness of your faith, as Peter writes:

Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- 1 Peter 1:6-7

So continue to endure and remain in the rest of God as you trust his word, because when Jesus Christ returns and is fully revealed in the reality of his creation, you will receive praise, glory and honor from the Lord himself.

#6 – THE APPOINTED TIME...WAIT FOR IT (Habakkuk 2:3)

*The vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.*

- Habakkuk 2:3

*At the set time that I appoint
I will judge with equity.*

- Psalm 75:2

He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.

- Acts 17:31

Justice is part of God's good character. Judgment of rebellion, sin, and evil is the logical result of the Goodness of God. The challenging part of this logic is that some judgment will take place in time, but other judgment is reserved for a future day. Paul makes this clear in his first letter to Timothy:

*The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.
In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.*
- 1 Timothy 5:24-25

And we know that rewards and promises work in a similar way. Some promises and blessings occur in this life, while other promises and rewards are reserved for later when God's plan and purpose have been fulfilled.

Since this is true concerning both the judgment of evil and the fulfillment of God's promises, we are told in the Bible to "wait for it."

*If it seems slow, wait for it;
It will surely come; it will not delay.*

- Habakkuk 2:3

The Lord will judge good and evil with equity, but this will not take place fully until "the set time" (Ps. 75:2). Remain in God's rest knowing all will be judged and all will be fair, and that we are all waiting for the "appointed time" (Hab. 2:3), for he "has set a day" (Acts 17:31) - a day on which he "will judge with equity" (Ps 75:2) and "will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Even while waiting, we must not become bitter or skeptical. We must understand that "the vision awaits its appointed time."

We are all waiting for fulfilled promises and rewards, just as we are all waiting for judgment and a personal evaluation in the future. Today we can remain in God's rest knowing that "it will surely come; it will not delay." But, for now we are told to "wait for it."