

Bible Study

Running with endurance

(edited transcript)

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Contents

Futility and bondage to the fear of death	1
The sin that so easily ensnares us	2
Running our race	3
The Author and Finisher	3
Converted from carnal living	4
Enduring for the joy set before us	5
Do not become weary and discouraged.....	5
Power in His blood, His life poured out.....	6
Losing your life and finding His.....	7
Grace for resisting to bloodshed	7
Remembering our sonship and our name.....	7
Perfect love casts out fear	8
Get understanding.....	9
Proceed by faith.....	9
Rest in hope.....	9
No longer I, but Christ who lives in me	10
Pray in the Spirit	10

My subject today is, 'Running with endurance'. The subtitle could be something like, 'Staying viable, or prospering, under the pressure of suffering'. That's something we'd all like to know: how to stay viable and in fact prosper when we're under pressure, rather than going under and being like a rat on a wheel, going around in circles all the time, or sinking into some kind of stoic, sub-Christian existence, toughing it out until we can get our head back up again when the suffering stops. There is no

victory in those kinds of hopeless circular or tough stoic routines. They are futile, as the apostle Paul testified:

"I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind." (Ephesians 4:17)

Futility and bondage to the fear of death

'Gentiles' are those who have not found Christ or come into the body of Christ. *There* is futility! We know that the whole of creation has been bound over by God to futility. He bound it in hope, but nevertheless bound it over to futility (Romans 8:20). What, then, *is* this futility that is operative and governs everything including the mind that in which the Gentiles walk? It is a futility that is governed by fear - the fear of death, and of loss; the fear of grief, pain, and suffering. Of *course* it's futile to try and avoid death and suffering, because everyone suffers, and in the end, everyone dies.

Every civilisation in the world has been set up in response to threat. Without the controlling elements of civilisation, such as borders, police, law courts and so on, the fear of death would win over all and we would live in anarchy. It is widely acknowledged that after three days without food and essential services we would

all descend into anarchy¹. That would be true because of the nature of men and women living in the fear of death. Faced with a real threat of starving or thirsting to death, people will fight and kill to survive.

The average human being, history tells us, is not selfless but is out to survive at any cost. That's how man lives. Survival is the goal and death is the supreme authority. If you talk to anyone about anything to do with their own life, or if you threaten them or their family with harm, then the principle of survival will rule. The fear of death will win. That is the principle by which the whole world lives - the futile fight to survive against the fear of death. If you walk according to that futile principle of survival, if that is your mindset, then the spiritual mindset of Christ, to which the Scripture exhorts us, will not be in you (Philippians 2:5).

The average human being cannot relate to these words of Jesus:

"He who would save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."
(Matthew 16:25)

That doesn't make sense to the natural human mind. It doesn't compute with the futile way that we think or live because self-protection is our supreme doctrine. Our natural doctrine is to look after ourselves and our family, and that's about it. Some people want to do a little more than that, seeking to save the planet or vote governments in or out for the sake of change, but such activities are also based in futility and the fear of death. There is nothing civilised in what we call civilisation, in which people run around in fear and anger trying to fix things. They may not kill others, but there is

certainly argument, and, as the Scriptures tell us, bondage to the fear of death.

"In as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, [Jesus]...shared in the same that through death, He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subjected to bondage."(Hebrews 2:14)

Being in bondage to fear and under its rule doesn't mean that people are walking around consciously afraid of things. A lot of people who are highly anxious don't realise they're anxious. Nevertheless, they walk around in the fear of death. It's not that they're thinking, 'I hope I don't die today'. They are simply walking around with their own priorities, needs and desires at the top of their minds, seeking and acting along the way to mitigate any pain and suffering. That's why we spend so much on health care, isn't it? But even if we were to spend the whole national budget on health care, we still couldn't prevent suffering.

The whole world is under bondage to, and is fundamentally driven by, the fear of death. If we don't understand this, then we don't understand the way human beings function or interrelate.

The sin that so easily ensnares us

How, then, can we remain viable as Christian sons of God when we are under the pressure of suffering and difficulty, when we are so easily ensnared? The Book of Hebrews tells us:

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily

¹ First postulated in 1906 by investigative journalist Alfred Henry Lewis and repostulated many times since.

ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

One of the main snares we face is that under the pressure of suffering and difficulty we grow weary and can be tempted to just let go. But if we *do* let go, a whole raft of other things can easily ensnare us and then become the default coping mechanisms of our lives. When we fall back on these mechanisms, they end up being ‘just what we do’. That is why Paul tells us to lay aside, or put off, the sin that so easily ensnares us.

In the season we are currently in, we need to understand that the discouragement and lack of hope that comes over us when we feel the pressure is sin, and we have to put that off if we are to run our race.

You and I *must* run our race, otherwise we will define the whole of our life believing it is too hard to be a Christian. ‘Too hard’ could apply to anything we need to do that is past our natural limits. There *are* things in life that become too hard once we hit our limit. In fact, they are impossible for us. Only God can deliver us from the things that bind us to our own limits, and He will, because He doesn't want anything to remain in us that is not part of the unique name He has given us.

Running our race

“...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

It would be mindless to set this exhortation up as a positive-thinking mantra: ‘I’m running the race...I’m running the race...I’m geeing myself up and I’m running the race’, for each person’s race is unique and very specific. ‘The race that is set before us’ means the specific works that God has given each of one of us to do. He is working to mature us so that we can each be

about His business, doing the things He wants us to do.

The race *you* are to run with endurance is personalised and very specific, not generic, and not run by ‘powering on’. We need to gain understanding so that we can run our *particular* race with endurance.

In any cross-country race, one of the things you *must* know is where the course goes. Have you ever become lost running a cross-country race? It’s not only a very disturbing experience, it also leads to disqualification. Of course, there are runners who *claim* to have been lost and accidentally cut kilometres off the course in the process of coming back on track, but you’re not to cheat, or power on mindlessly, running up hill and down dale, frothing at the mouth. You’re to run the specific race that’s been set by the Lord for you to run, and you’re to run so as to get the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24).

God has fashioned your days and given you a unique name. You are to connect with and understand your name. This is what Abraham had to do. He didn't at first understand what God was saying to him but had to endure a great horror of darkness and drive the birds of the air off his offering until he gained understanding (Genesis 15:8-21).

A hearer who doesn't understand what God is saying, who keeps hearing His word week after week without it making any difference, who keeps doing the same things over and over again without anything growing, is on wayside ground.

The Author and Finisher of our faith

To run our race, we need to look to Jesus.

“...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Where did Jesus set your race and author and finish faith? In the cross! There, He authored and finished *all* the work, saying, when it was done, 'It is finished!' (John 19:30). You and I just need to enter His finished work and run with Him. He's already authored and run our race, setting it out and marking it all before us. So, let's not just sprint off anywhere we think the course might or should be. Let's not get distracted and stop looking where we're going so that we fall and injure ourselves or other runners. Jesus is asking each one of us: 'Can you run the race that I've set before *you*?'

Part of your race is before you right now. Today. There are certain things before you, some of which in your sight look good, some not so good. The question is, as you run this part of your race and find difficulty, what will you do? Become a bit more positive, a bit more pro-active?

What *can* you do when your course becomes difficult? Only this: Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. That means looking unto Jesus in the race He ran for you all the way from the Garden of Gethsemane to Calvary. Through His seven wounding events, the last of which opened the way for you to join Him, Jesus has set your race.

You have received a name from the Father, and the Father is directing you towards that name and towards that walk *in Christ* so that, as the Father's son, you can fulfil you're the works He has given you. God does not change His mind about you or despise you. You may not like yourself, or certain things about yourself, but God does not change His mind. He does not change what He has spoken in His love about you. Your race is set.

Converted from carnal living

Our pathway has been authored and has also been finished by Christ. It's complete. The way is open for each of us to enter in to rest with Christ. However, to enter His rest, we have to be converted from our carnality - from operating by the strength and motivations of our own flesh and not by the grace of God, by the Holy Spirit. Our carnality comes from what Paul called 'another law' at work in our members (Romans 7:23).

This 'other' law, a law we live by that is other than God's law, motivates us to define ourselves and our own race, and to head off accordingly in the way we've defined for ourselves. Any teacher will know that even the most promising students can destroy their exam results by ignoring questions that *have* been asked and instead answering some other questions that *haven't* been asked but better suit their preparation. Even exemplary answers to unset questions will result in examination failure.

Do you see the point? God is very specific, and the life He has made for us is very specific. He has set each person's race - a whole pathway ahead - and He calls us to our path. While ever we keep answering Him according to our own way rather than according to what He has set for us, we will fail. We will miss the mark because we did not listen.

We've *got* to listen! God is trying to get our attention. If He keeps communicating 'F' results and red strike-lines to you in the course you're on, you should be registering that you're running amiss. Wouldn't it be sensible to recognise that, instead of laying blame on others or on 'the system'? People get involved in all sorts of political activism because they want to change the system they think is trying to destroy them. That's called paranoia, and we

shouldn't be paranoid! God does not put us in a system. He gives us a pathway.

Enduring for the joy set before us

As the Scripture exhorts, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,

"...who for the joy that was set before Him endured..." (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus had joy because a fellowship with the Father was set before Him. As He walked, He maintained the bonds of fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit and did not depart from that fellowship. The Father had set the door before Jesus, and as in obedience He walked through it, nothing anyone did to Him could rob Him of authoring and finishing His work. *Nothing* could rob Him because He was offering to God through Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). He was sustained supernaturally by what Paul called the 'exanastasis' - resurrection life in a mortal body (Philippians 3:10-11).

By Eternal Spirit, Jesus had the capacity to walk His pathway to the end without being bowed in any way. Those who abused Him could not break a bone of His body. They could not damage His structure and they could not kill Him. When He died, He *gave up* His spirit. He could have hung there on the cross for as long as He determined. They could not kill Him, no matter what they did to Him!

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, about a thousand people came to arrest Him and take Him away. That was heavily overdone, don't you think? Then, He was punched, beaten with rods, and whipped with all kinds of gruesome instruments. They thrashed His back to pieces and shoved long thorns into His head. They hammered nails through His hands and feet and hung Him up to

asphyxiate. You'd think it would be impossible to survive that kind of brutality, yet *they could not kill Him*.

As you walk out *your* path, which Jesus has authored for you, nothing that is thrown at you can destroy you if you remain connected to Him. When forces are marshalled against you, everything shouting against you, 'You're going to die!', stay with Him. Keep looking to Him. When temptation comes against you, the sin that so easily ensnares and the fear of death seeking to bind you to turn away and run, shouting, 'You're going to die! This is going to kill you! Withdraw! Fight! Do whatever you can to control the situation but get out of it!', stay with Him. For as soon as we run, we come back under the futility of mind that we're supposed to have been delivered from.

How does it feel to be under futility? Futile! Feeling that there's no way through and the way is hopeless, all you do is shout to Jesus, 'Get me down off this cross!' In this state, you're dying with Christ but it's not doing you the slightest bit of good. You're suffering, but it's not delivering you. The Lord does *not* want us to do this!

"... for the joy that was set before Him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God..." (Hebrews 12:2)

The throne of God, where Jesus is now seated, is in heavenly places. And now we are *with* Him, for we have been raised there with Him through baptism. We are raised with Christ and now, in the faith of our baptism, we are walking out our lives.

Do not become weary and discouraged

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become

weary and discouraged in your souls.” (Hebrews 12:3)

This is a crucial point, and at the heart of what I am speaking about. Jesus, although He was the Son of God, was also a Son of man with all our human biological, physiological and psychological makeup. Consider the hostility of sin against Him. It was no easier for Him to bear although He was the Son of God, for as the Son of man He was also completely a man.

If you don't remain connected to Christ throughout the difficulties you face, you will become weary and discouraged in your soul - in your whole psyche, your whole outlook - and under the pressure of your circumstances, you'll let go, believing it's too hard and you can't do it. You'll lean instead on your old self-protective mechanisms and do what you shouldn't do.

When we hear ourselves saying, 'It's too hard', we know we're being carnal. That's a very simple measurement you can use. If you question whether Jesus has given you a certain circumstance, you are at risk of saying that what He has given you is a life that is too hard for you and that there's no power in Him to help you. What *God* will be saying in your circumstances is that it *is* too hard for your flesh, so do not be carnal!

If you can offer yourself to God, through Eternal Spirit, then you *will* be able to walk through the circumstance. You might not be jumping up and down with joy as you walk, but you will be walking with your eyes set on the goal. You'll find you're being sustained by the power of God, not by your own stoicism, and far from being destroyed by the circumstance, you'll find renewal and healing through it.

Power in His blood, His life poured out

Paul tells us how this happens:

“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” (Hebrews 12:4)

He is not proposing we self-flagellate to prove our repentance from sin. What he *is* showing us is Jesus, whose suffering we have been exhorted in the preceding verse to consider (Hebrews 12:3). In seeing Jesus, we see *His* bloodshed as, from the Garden of Gethsemane to His cross, Christ's trauma in being made the sin of the whole world caused His blood to flow. He was becoming a sin offering for us all at each point His blood was spilled.

If we look back to Old Testament times, we see that the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled by the High Priest on the mercy seat that was on the Ark of the Covenant (Leviticus 16:11-16). Paul declared that Christ is our High Priest and our Mercy Seat on which He sprinkled His own blood, shed at terrible cost, seven times on His suffering journey to the cross (Hebrews 9:11-12; Romans 3:23-25).

Let's be very clear that Jesus' blood was *not* a legal satisfaction for the Father so that we could believe and go to heaven. It was the blood of His *life*; the balm of Gilead for our healing (Jeremiah 8:22). For *your* healing. His lifeblood was poured out for *you* in every sprinkling, answering all the impacts of sin - the fear of death, hostility, accusation, betrayal - in every detail - your sin, my sin, the sin of every person in all of humanity. Jesus died for *all* of it so that we could be recovered from it and healed; so that we could be forgiven and delivered from our shame. *There* is power!

There is power in the blood of Christ that was shed for us as He authored and finished a pathway for us. We're walking that pathway, not dying for other people as Christ did, but dying daily with Him, just as Paul testified (1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 4:8-11).

Losing your life and finding His

At what point, then, is sin dealt with in our life? Will it be the same for each person? This is one of the things we need to understand when we are at our point of maximum pain, because this is where the sprinkling of Christ's blood is applied; this is where God takes us, past the limits of our flesh, and delivers us from trying to save our own life. You lose *your* life, and suddenly, you find *His* life. Losing your life takes trust and it takes faith. It takes you beyond what you think your flesh can accept or endure, and into offering with Christ by Eternal Spirit. And lo and behold, you find are not destroyed but are beginning to be delivered.

Therefore, in situations that would normally provoke you to react in self-protection, you can keep presenting yourself to the Lord. In situations where you feel hurt, marginalized or under pressure, or from which you would normally run or withdraw from relationship, you can press in and give yourself to love. The Lord can then begin to work in you; He can work His miracle in you. But if you just run away, or hold to the limits you've set on how much pain you'll accept; if you insist on the right to behave as you like when circumstances don't line up for you or when the pain is beyond your 'limits', then your suffering will be futile and will achieve *nothing*. You will still suffer, but as the Scripture says, you will suffer in vain (Galatians 3:3-4).

Who wants to suffer in vain? Who wants to fall from grace, as Paul warned the Galatians they had done by resorting to justifying themselves by the law (Galatians 5:4)?

Grace for resisting to bloodshed

If you rely on your flesh, there will be no grace available for you. It will all just be hard work. But do you see the blood of Christ, shed and

sprinkling in mercy? *This* is where the Lord will take you, with Him, but you will need to find His help to get past your own limits and to let Him make a breach on your flesh. Then, you will no longer be defined by your own coping mechanisms or the limits that have constrained you, keeping you short-circuiting your race and entangled in the same old sin. Staying with Christ, we won't be turning aside or turning back as if we not only haven't resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin, we've also forgotten the love of God, as the Hebrews had done:

"You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as sons" (Hebrews 12:5)

Can you hear the Father's exhortation, right in the middle of difficult circumstances, right when you're wanting to cry out for to God to end your suffering, can you hear that He is speaking to you as His son? Rather than railing against the circumstances we don't like, which is our natural way, can we talk with the Lord instead? He can cope with any conversation in this vein we can bring to Him, but let's not justify our carnality by saying that a circumstance has pushed us too far. I'm telling you, the only reward you will get in that case is the self-indulgent moment you've already had. Everything after that will be fallout. Collateral damage. And you will have missed God speaking to you as a son.

Remembering our sonship and our name

If, during your difficulty, you've forgotten that God the Father is dealing with you as a son, then you've also forgotten your sonship. Your name is 'out the window' because your whole preoccupation is with your difficulty and your desire for it to stop. Having forgotten your sonship, you will also have forgotten the

manner of love by which you were called a son in the first place:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called sons of God.” (1 John 3:1)

Further, if you’ve stopped regarding the manner of the Father’s love towards you, then you will also have stopped receiving the love of God towards you as a son. You will instead be looking for some other form of love, having rejected the love of God that you don’t believe is working for you. You will want another ‘love’, one that is sympathetic to your flesh.

But if you don't have the love of God, what do you have its place? There is only one alternative - fear.

Perfect love casts out fear

It is only perfect love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18). If you don't know the Gospel or are not walking in the faith of the Son of God for your life, in fellowship with the Father, then you will *only* have anxiety.

Anxiety drives everything in the community around us. Do you want to be joined to that anxious battleground where everyone drives their own agenda and pushes their own ideas in competitive self-protection? No wonder anxiety, depression and all kinds of distresses are rampant in our world that is totally out of control. How we need the love of God!

If you *are* anxious, there is no way you will be able to endure when you are tempted. Unless you can remind yourself in times of trouble that you are a son of God, sooner or later you will choose the wrong pathway. However, when you know you’re anxious, and choose to put off your anxiety and stay right where the Lord has put you, even though in your flesh it feels too

hard, you will find that with God *nothing* is impossible (Matthew 19:26)! Turning to Him, we will know that, as He assures us:

“...Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Everything in our lives needs to be achieved by the Spirit of God. If not, it will only be the work of our own hands. We’ll think we’re clever chaps, but what good is that?

We need understand that the answer and only pathway to joy and lasting happiness is to suffer *with* Christ. Of course, life is not all about being miserable. The fact is, though, that we will suffer - but do we want to respond according to our own ways and be miserable, or do we want to respond God's way and know and reflect His life, joy and peace?

The apostle Paul wrote of the consolation we find in Christ - the consolation of the cross (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). This consolation of Christ is a ministry of encouragement to our hearts to keep going. It's not positive thinking, it is a spiritual ministry. Barnabas was called by the apostles a son of encouragement, or consolation (Acts 4:36). As we walk on the pathway of suffering with Christ, encouragement will come as we find and connect with the work of His cross. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will encourage us, and our brethren will also encourage us, so that we do not seek compensation instead of the consolation of Christ.

If we seek compensation, we will indulge in aberrant behaviours, avoidance techniques, legal assessments or philosophical rationalisations as means of regaining control. We all *hate* feeling out of control, particularly when things are not going well, but that's the truth of it. We *don't* have control! So, we'd better look to the Lord for understanding so we

know what's going on and don't keep head-butting the same brick walls!

Get understanding

After the word of the Lord came to Abraham, he had to endure a great horror of darkness (Genesis 15). 'A great horror of darkness' does not describe a cinematic experience. The horror of darkness Abraham endured was something that, without the capacity of God to help him, would have been unendurable for him. And yet he walked through that darkness and guarded his offering until he gained understanding.

That's what *we* must do. As we obtain understanding, then we are equipped to keep going to the next stage. The darkness doesn't last forever; we do get through it. And when we do, we have a testimony. Thank the Lord!

Proceed by faith

We need to proceed by faith. Remember, the love of God is being poured into our hearts, and His love deals with our fear (Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:18). Faith *works* by love, and faith comes as the word comes (Galatians 5:6; Romans 10:17). If love is in our hearts and the word of God finds us, then we not only believe the word, we are joined to it, and He begins to deliver us to a better way.

We believe, and therefore we speak. We testify, in faith, about the way we're going. We don't necessarily feel chipper about it, but that's not important. What *is* important is that we're speaking in faith. Just as God spoke into being things which were not, so we speak and agree with God. His will begins to come to pass in us.

The opposite of faith that speaks is commentary - religious commentary about

ourselves and about other people. When we are carnal, we have a lot to say about other people! This is not endurance. It's control; it's us trying to control circumstances, people, and things to get outcomes that suit us. Instead of finding rest for our souls, we will only find anxiety, and our anxious controls will produce so many bad outcomes that keep smacking us in the face we won't know what to do.

When we don't have understanding, we *cause* these face smacks, all the while crying out about the fact that we're getting smacked in the face. We do not understand that we are causing our own pain, and we want people to feel sorry for us because we think our circumstances are not our fault.

The biggest illumination some of us might receive today is that *we're* the ones causing the things that are hitting us in the face. We provoked them, and we keep on doing so. God wants to deliver us from that!

Rest in hope

We find grace for life operative as we rest in the hope of the word of God. If we our hope is elsewhere, we won't find His grace of life that multiplies His life. Instead, we will find conflict. Everything will be hard; everything will be difficult. Fear and control will kick in as soon as we feel that someone else is trying to control us. That won't end well! We'll find conflict instead of grace. We'll strive to make ourselves feel better instead of joining and participating in Christ's offering. We'll withdraw into ourselves. Our smiles will become a bit shallow and we won't want to relate to the people with whom we are in conflict. Instead of seeing and loving their name and fellowshiping with them, we will react to what they're doing. We will be unable to love them but will only want

them to change, believing the lie that if only *they* changed, we could love them more.

What all of this does is bind us to the sin that so easily ensnares us. Habitual, carnal responses take over instead of the spiritual responses of the new man.

No longer I, but Christ who lives in me

You and I have not seen what God has in store for us (1 Corinthians 2:9). Unless and until we endure, we cannot know the wonder and the miracle of what He has in store for us. We can't even know how much what He has for us is worth enduring *for*.

However, once the new man begins to stand up, we start saying, like Paul, 'It's not I who lives any more - it's Christ living in me,' (Galatians 2:19-20). That's when we *know* we're being delivered, and we find we're loving where we could not love before. We find we're bringing peace where formerly we provoked conflict and difficulty; we're able to lay our life down where previously we could not do so. We see life coming to other people through us because Christ has done a work in us; because we've endured the chastening of the Father and not despised it. We've understood the exhortation that was speaking to us as sons, we've received the love of God and have hung in there with Him. *This* is how we endure, remain viable and see life come through suffering!

We either go this way, the way God has made for us, or we go our own way and suffer in vain. There are only these two options. Which are we going to choose? Which will *you* choose? If you go your own way you will have the anxiety gospel and anxiety in prayer. As soon as you're in a world of pain, your prayer will either stop (let's be honest) or it will be driven by your anxieties. We need to pray in the Spirit!

Pray in the Spirit

It is no secret, and it should be a well-known fact, that we need to pray in the Spirit to get past our anxiety, and God will deliver us from our anxiety as we pray in the Spirit, joining Him.

Prayer is one of the ways we have fellowship with the Lord and join Him in His offering. As we pray in the Spirit, instead of praying about our problems from our the basis of our emotions and perceptions, which do surface as we pray, we keep on praying in the Spirit and the Spirit helps us to endure through and past our anxieties, settling our hearts within us, changing our attitude even though our problem may remain. With Him, we're able to walk *through* on the way God is giving us and to stop fighting for a way out that God is *not* giving us.

Inevitably, as we are oriented by the Spirit towards the way God is dealing with the matters affecting us, we will stop reacting and trying to take control, and matters *will* begin to change. Our relationships or whatever difficulty has been troubling us will begin to shift.

As we pray in the Spirit, God does the unique work in us that He wanted to do right from the start, a work that we didn't see because all we wanted was the issue resolved and the suffering stopped. We didn't *want* that relational problem, that sickness or whatever issue it is we are facing. However, as we pray to the Lord, we understand that He gave us that very circumstance for our chastening because we are His sons and He loves us.

The question is, which way will we respond to His chastening? Will we try to avoid the pain? Fight the circumstance? Exert control? Provoke conflict? Or will we come to rest? All manner of sufferings are part of our lives, so we're going to have to learn how to walk out our

circumstances. Funnily enough, most of the circumstances we don't like are things we chose in the first place! We complain and blame God and other people when we don't like the way our choices turn out. It's time to grow up and mature, isn't it?

When people are walking through times of suffering, we don't really know what these things mean in their lives, or what the Lord is doing in and through them. What we *do* know is that God has a way through for us when we suffer; He has an answer. When our brethren suffer, we all suffer, and we can best help one another in times of trouble by our love and support as each one walks in faith with Christ through whatever trouble they are in.
