**ENDURANCE (#1)**

***“For You Have Need Of Endurance”***

I have for many years been absolutely fascinated with the story of Ernest Shackleton and his amazing story of leadership and fortitude in the ill-fated expedition to Antarctica in the years of 1914 to 1917. Shackleton was an adventurer who was passionate about exploring and discovering new frontiers. He had already made a number of expeditions to far off places of the world, but the British explorer had for years dreamed of being the first man to make a transcontinental walk across Antarctica, in what he called the last frontier. After securing funding, and the ship to take him, he gathered his 28-man hand-picked crew and set sail for the massive frozen tundra of the south pole. The ship, appropriately, was named the *HMS Endurance*. That name would perfectly describe what took place over the next two and a half years.

Just a few days into the voyage they ran into an ice pack that threatened them. Courageously (or foolishly, depending on your perspective) they kept going. But soon they found themselves entrapped in the ice and unable to move. Slowly, methodically, over a period of months, the ice enclosed them, crushing the wood ship and sinking it. The expedition would become a failure, but now the mere survival for life was the goal. In perhaps one of history’s greatest examples of leadership Ernest Shackleton accomplished the seemingly impossible by keeping the 28 men alive! Every last one of them survived this ordeal because their leader kept their hopes alive and their morale focused on living one day at a time. If you’ve never read this amazing story I highly recommend reading Alfred Lansing’s Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage (1986), or Caroline Alexander’s *The Endurance: Shackleton’s Legendary Antarctic Expedition* (1998).

Endurance. Isn’t that what we all need more of? In our walk of faith it is so easy in this easy-come easy-go world to just walk away from our commitments and confessions. A look at the divorce rate proves my point, showing commitment to vows is in decline. Another look at the drop-out rate in both high schools and colleges gives exclamations to my point. High School dropouts rose to over 1,200,000 last year (that’s 7,000 per day!). A study of how often someone changes jobs would shock you. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says a person entering the work force today will average about 12 job changes in their lifetime. My point is obvious, sticking to a promise or commitment is in peril in our nation.

Among the Lord’s people it has always been true since New Testament days that the fallout rate among those who made the good confession of faith is a serious problem. The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the New Testament to warn us about staying the course and not giving up. Over and over and over again the Spirit warned us of apostacy of our faith. Especially was the warning made clear in the book of Hebrews where the danger of falling away was seemingly reaching epidemic proportions. As the old saying goes, they were “falling like flies.” Read the writer’s warning:

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

After commending them for their initial faith and their steadfastness through trials and tribulations in former days, they were now facing a crisis of “buyer’s remorse.” They were second-guessing their decision to become Christians. They began to long for the “good old days” of Judaism, with all of its traditions. It seemed more safe and secure in the comfort zone of life as Jew, over the threats and persecutions of following Christ.

The inspired writer, whether it was Paul or some other man, said to Christians then, and now, these needed words of encouragement: “*YOU HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE*!”

I cannot think of six more urgent words today then that sentence. Endurance is the power of going on in spite of difficulties. Popular colloquial phrases describe it as: "Keep on keeping on." "Hang in there." "Put up with it." "Stick-to-itiveness." "Don't quit." Its synonyms are determination, perseverance, tenacity, plodding, stamina, and backbone. The NT uses the Greek word *HUPOMONE*, which means "to abide under," "to bear up courageously," and "to tarry or wait." It is translated “patience,” “steadfastness,” “perseverance,” and “endurance.” All of those words suggest to us a tenacity that says I’ll never give up, no matter what! It is saying to the Lord, “I made a vow to You, and You can therefore count on me, come what may!”

When Jesus was counseling His disciples as to what was coming their way in the future regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the persecutions by both Jews and Romans, He made this powerful statement in Luke 21:16-19 that we all need to hear as well:

“You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. ***By your patience*** *(HUPOMONE)* ***possess your souls***.”

Far too many Christians during this pandemic are using isolation and social distancing as an opportunity to slack off on their faith. Some are falling away from the Lord. We can see it happening before our very eyes. Satan is using these times of distress to pluck the weak of faith from their confession to Christ. But Jesus here reminds us in no uncertain terms, “*By your endurance you will gain your lives*” (ESV, NASB, RSV, CSB).

So let me ask you, if you were with Earnest Shackleton would you have quit? Would you have just given up? Probably not, for all the other 28 men, including your leader, were encouraging you to keep fighting for your life. But now I’m asking you, on behalf of Jesus, the greatest leader of men in history, are you now in danger of giving up your confession of faith to Him? If so, then Jesus says, “*You have need of endurance*.” He then adds, “*By your patience, possess your souls*.”

Let’s go to heaven together! You can do it! Don’t quit now! - Rick