

## Understanding the Old Testament

### Message #3: Endurance

Video

**Romans 15:4-6 (turn around and read together)**

Today: **Endurance.**

Define Endurance:

- **hupomonē = cheerful endurance, constancy: - patience, continuance (waiting).**
- In English, the noun endurance is defined as **“the power of enduring a difficult process or situation without giving way.”**

**I know many of you aren't runners.**

- I wasn't until just 5 or 6 year ago, and even then, I'm not sure a 10-minute mile qualifies to call myself a runner.
- But I hope you're active in SOME sort of physical endurance.
  - First, because it's good for your body – the temple of the Holy Spirit – to take care of what God has given you.
  - Second, because I believe the best analogy to enduring Spiritual life is the act of enduring in the physical.
  - IOW, getting to the point where you don't think you can go on, but finding that extra second wind, and finishing the race.
  - If you don't regularly experience doing something physically straining, I propose to you that you will find endurance in spiritual things much harder.
- Paul uses the athletic analogy, as do several of the prophets, when teaching about enduring with God through this earthly life.

Our Old Testament reading and teaching today comes out of Exodus 21, thru Numbers 14, and into the first part of the book of Joshua.

This section of scripture covers only about 41 years of human history (unlike the 1000+ last week!).

- It is a story of **God's endurance with a people:** The Nation He chose to live among, and bless all nations through: The people of Israel.
- And it is a story of **the younger generation's survival and their “enduring of God's timing - a difficult process without giving way”** for many, many years.

**Golden calf story...**

- God brings Israel out of Egyptian slavery
- He works miracle upon miracle to prove to Israel He is their savior and deliverer
- He parts the Red Sea – a dramatic final blow to Pharaoh – and the people walk across

- He leads them on a month-long journey to the base of Mt Sinai
- He calls Moses to the top – into His presence, and the people SEE the pillar of cloud, with thunder, fire – an amazing display of God’s presence
- And God speaks through the cloud and thunder to the people, giving them the 10 Commandments
- The people are in awe, but also in fear for their lives because of the intense glory of the Lord.
- They beg Moses to – from now on – be the one to whom God speaks. Not them.
- Moses goes up the mountain again, and this time, God writes the 10 commandments on tablets of stone.
- While God is doing this, the people – stunningly – believe Moses is taking too long on the mountain.
- They look to Aaron, Moses’s brother, and decide to melt down all the gold they took from the Egyptians and mold it into a GOLDEN CALF, and worship the image as the god who led them out of Egypt.
  - **They can literally see the glory of the Lord on the mountain!**
  - And they immediately break the first two commandments within days.
  - God’s anger burns – the mountain shakes with thunder and earthquakes, and He says to Moses, leave me alone, I’m about to kill them ALL.
  - Moses intercedes... appeals to him by his mercy as well as his promise and purpose for all nations to be blessed through Abraham and Israel...
  - God relents, but a measure of justice is necessary.
  - God sends Moses down with instructions:
    - ***“Send the Levite priests into the camp and kill anyone still opposed to Me.”***
      - How did the Levites know who to kill?
      - (Those still worshipping the golden calf)
    - And the Levites took the sword to 3000 men that very day.
    - It’s a hard passage to read.

**(next)** Kyle, I thought you were teaching on God’s ENDURANCE today... that seemed like a fast judgment! How does this relate to endurance?

- Stay with me...
- That’s the first part of the story – I’m going to come back to it.

#### **Death –**

- Where do OT people go when they die?
- These 3,000 souls, where did they go?
  - **Both the righteous and the wicked/faithless went to Sheol**
    - Jacob, Job, David, Isaiah – all spoke of themselves going to Sheol when they died
    - And Isaiah, David and several other Psalmists spoke of the wicked going there as well.

- Sheol in the Greek is “Hadees” (Hades)
- The NT is quite clear:
  - Pre-cross, (pre eternal salvation and victory over death) when Jesus speaks of Hades, he tells a story of Lazarus being in Abraham’s Bosom (Abraham’s - which is KEY), and an unnamed rich man in Hades as well, albeit on the other side of a chasm separating him from Lazarus and Abraham.
  - The fact that no one could cross this chasm indicates that, **after death, one’s fate is sealed.**
  - Then, Paul and Jesus and all the gospels speak of “heaven” as a place where the righteous (by faith) go IMMEDIATELY upon their physical death.
  - And Revelation 20 speaks of that time when God judges the wicked.

**(next)** Let’s go back to the Golden Calf

- How many people were killed that day, by order of the Lord?
  - 3,000
- How many people were at the base of the mountain in total?
  - 600,000 men – add wives and children and there were at least 3,000,000.
  - Secular historians place Egypt’s population in 1500 BC around 3M
  - But God’s Word tells us that Egypt enslaved Israel because Israel OUTNUMBERED the Egyptians, and Egypt feared they’d join outside forces in war against them someday.
  - So 3 million is a very conservative number. It was probably much more than that.
  - But let’s use 3,000,000 to illustrate one thing:
    - God’s judgment upon the people at the base of the mountain – instead of killing all 3M, killed 3,000.
    - 0.1% of the people died as a “just” punishment.
    - **God’s mercy and endurance over a sinful, unfaithful people prevailed.**

But Kyle, that’s still 3,000 people God just killed!

- What if they would have exercised faith later in life?
- Why wouldn’t God give them another chance?
- This is a fair question, one which the Bible does answer CLEARLY.

Answer:

- Regarding death, **God knows the heart.**
  - **1Ch 28:9 “And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought.”**
  - **Psalm 139:1-4, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You**

**search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.**

- **Pro 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.**
  - Weighs = measures, a leveling

Do you TRUST that God knows the past, present, and future?

- Does He know who will put their faith in Him even before it happens?
- Even as I taught through Romans 9, arguing that while God desires everyone place their faith in Him as their Lord, not everyone does – by their own choosing.
- Does God KNOW in advance of this choice?
  - Yes, the Bible is clear He does.
  - Therefore, even among the 3,000, God’s sovereign justice placed ALL 3,000 in Sheol, and immediately separated out those whose ETERNAL hearts were judged by God as righteous or faithless.
  - God knows the eternal condition of the heart.
  - And my hope is that you have a great level of comfort in that truth as you READ the Old Testament.

“Kyle, I’m still waiting for the ‘ENDURANCE’ part...”

**OK, back to the base of Mt Sinai...**

First, please understand that God’s endurance has already been shown in his mercy.

- He spared 99.9% of His people, ALL of whom (the Bible says) turned away from Him and immediately disobeyed His first two commands.
- But let’s see what happens next...

Moses goes back up the mountain and for 30 days, God dictates to him 613 other laws, all contained in the book of Leviticus.

Also contained in Leviticus are the instructions for constructing **the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant**, which would house the presence of the Lord as they began their journey toward Canaan.

- 10 months after the Golden Calf incident, the construction of the Tabernacle and Ark are completed, and God leads the people toward Canaan.
- Enter the book of Numbers...

**Num 10:35-36 And whenever the ark set out**, Moses said, “Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.” And when it rested, he said, “Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.”

- One of my favorite exchanges between God and man is found in chapter 11.

- Num 11:4-6 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”
- Now, this is one of literally DOZENS of times the “rabble” complains.
- And the fire of the Lord was kindled against them.
- And Moses has had enough:
- Num 11:11-15 Moses said to the LORD, “Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me?... I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.”
  - God sort of appeases Moses... no time for that story...
- But one month later, with MORE grumbling continuing...
  - They come to a place just outside Canaan.
  - God instructs Moses to send 12 spies – one from each tribe - to check out the land.
  - Among the 12 are Caleb and Joshua
  - They go up, see the land and the inhabitants, and 10 of them come back with a “bad report” of giants in the land, and fear.
    - And the people side with the 10.
  - Num 14:6-12 And Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and said, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.” **Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones.** But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you (Moses) a nation greater and mightier than they.”
  - Num 14:13 But Moses said to the LORD (in a nutshell), (19) Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.”
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> time this happened – Abraham with Sodom, Moses with Israel at the base of Mt. Sinai, and now again as God led them to Canaan.
    - So the Lord relented
    - And instead of killing them all, God’s judgment is to allow the older generation – the one listening to the 10 spies – **to completely die off.**
  - He pronounces that judgment, then says in Num 14:25, “Now, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness back toward the Red Sea.”

- Bummer!
- This has got to be worse than “Are we there yet?” repeated...
- Not only are they NOT there yet, they’re going back to the beginning!
- And God settles them in a place called **Kadesh Barnea (which looks like this today – on screen)**, where they would set up camp and STAY for 37.5 YEARS.
  - That’s right.
  - You’ve heard the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years.
  - Not so much.
  - It took 13 MONTHS to get from Egypt to Mt. Sinai, to Canaan.
  - A month to get to Kadesh Barnea.
  - 37.5 years of absolutely NO storyline whatsoever.
  - Then 20 months between God saying, “OK, time to go to Canaan” round 2 – through 3 nations who wanted to war with Israel (whom God destroyed), and in the 40<sup>th</sup> year, Moses dies and Joshua leads Israel into the promised land, and THIS time, the people obeyed God.
  - And they took the land.

I’m going to put the definitions of endurance back on the screen:

- **hupomonē = cheerful endurance, constancy: - patience, continuance (waiting).**
- In English, the noun endurance is defined as **“the power of enduring a difficult process or situation without giving way.”**

Church, God MODELS this endurance... when it comes to YOU.

- It’s more than safe to say Israel was constantly impatient with God’s leadership.
- It’s equally accurate to say that God’s patience with Israel ran thin.
  - The Bible says
    - nothing is impossible for God
    - nothing is too difficult for God
  - But the Bible NEVER says “everything is too easy for God.”
    - Something that was hard for God:
      - **Not to justifiably pour out his wrath on disobedient or flat-out EVIL people!**
        - Sodom and Gomorrah were EVIL.
        - God’s anger burned against them and He declared His plan to remove them from the face of the earth.
          - But Abraham interceded, appealing to God on the basis of His mercy. And God relented.
        - At Mt Sinai: God’s anger burned toward Israel for their complete lack of acknowledgement of His presence and power to bring them out of slavery – in fact giving credit and worship to a fake god! And He declared to Moses His plan to destroy them all and start over.
          - And Moses interceded, and God relented.

- At the gate to Canaan: God's anger burned again toward His people for their fear and lack of trust that God would defeat the EVIL Canaanites and bring them into the Promised land, and declared His plan to destroy Israel and start over.
  - And Moses, again, interceded, and God relented.
- **Clearly, enduring a sinful, fearful, distrusting people is not EASY for God!**

**Mankind's relationship with God has a constant theme of enduring one another.**

- Man enduring God's timing, His discipline, His perfect wisdom that we don't get
- God enduring our fear, impatience, lack of vision, and laziness.
- IF ONLY GOD'S PEOPLE WOULD BE
  - FEARLESS
  - PATIENT
  - GRASP HIS VISION
  - AND WORK HARD TOWARD HIS PURPOSE.
- **READ: *But alas, we are a yet-perfect people.***
  - ***And God's love still abounds profoundly.***
  - ***Thank God His LOVE ENDURES forever.***
  - ***Thank God for Jesus Christ, in whom we are forever sealed by His Holy Spirit, escaping His wrath because we are covered by His blood.***
- **READ: *But if you want to remove the relationship tag of "impatience" between you and God, fix your eyes on Jesus in all life's challenges... hitch your wagon to His plow and get behind Him and watch Him move heaven and earth for His purposes to be fulfilled in you.***

I have a challenge for you today, as I have with each message:

- **1) Thank God more often than you tend to – for His enduring love over you. For His patience with you.**
- **2) Do you struggle with fear, impatience, lack of vision, and laziness toward God's will?**
  - **I challenge you to find a mentor. Today.**
  - Someone you've seen follow Jesus through fires and trials.
- And if you're someone who has indeed followed Jesus through fires and trials, my challenge to you is to **Say YES to ONE person looking for a mentor.**
  - I'm talking weekly meetings – getting to know one another, opening God's Word together, casting our fear, rebellion, impatience, and removing veils!

I'm going to close in prayer for exactly that: For mentors and mentees!