

INTRO - I talked on Thursday to a lady in Florida, named Jean. Jean has had difficulty with her health for years. In addition to other struggles, she has been diagnosed with Lupus, an auto-immune disease which brings pain. Then, when I was in Florida she was having troubles, and diagnosed with Myasthenia Gravis, which has made her more susceptible to respiratory disease and infection. Then, on Tuesday night Jean's daughter texted me that she was in the hospital. They thought it might be her other problems, but it turns out she has had a stroke, and it is affecting her speech. She improved somewhat and is in a rehabilitation hospital when I talked with her. I expressed my sorrow at her stroke. She answered in somewhat halting speech, "It's just another bump in the road of life." When she is suffering, she keeps going, trusting her Lord, and desiring to serve Him. She is enduring

I. That is the call of our Lord to Christians in today's Epistle lesson. **Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.** This life is a race of faith, a race of discipleship, of obedience, of life.

A. But people don't endure the good times. We endure tough times.

1. We endure illness, like Jean is doing.
2. Those tough times can cause us to grow **weary or fainthearted**, as Hebrews 12:3 says.
3. We endure the struggle with sin, with temptations of desires, of pride, of anger, struggles of doubt, and we seek to continue running the race of faith.

B. Maybe you see why we need this encouragement today. Maybe you understand why the LCMS Youth Gathering in July had the theme, "Endure."

1. Our world has always worn down faith.
2. It takes endurance to continue when we see evil in our world, when we face illness, when the world calls us away from God.
3. But, today's youth, and today's adults, face an assault on faith, on faithfulness, which we did not face 50-60 years ago when people sought to do God's will, rather than to be individuals who believe God cannot tell them to do.

C. Sometimes people do wear down. We

1. We do doubt. We do give in.
2. I've heard people say, perhaps you have said, "I just can't take it anymore."

II. How does Jean keep going. First, she has a strong faith that even when going through trials, that God loves her in Jesus. Second, very important, she has a loving husband and children who believe in Jesus and who spend time caring for her. She keeps going with their help and encouragement.

A. Hebrews tells us of the example and encouragement and divine help from Jesus.

1. I like the way the NIV translates verse 2. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

2. The pain, the shame, the weight of the cross is beyond anything we can understand. Jesus endured the cross for us.

B. Jesus endured the cross and forgives our sins.

1. Jesus rose and offers eternal life to those living in a world of pain.

2. Jesus sits at the right hand of God and is with us, interceding with the father in our times of need.

3. Jesus offers eternal deliverance from this world's wearying trials.

4. The endurance of Jesus is not just an example. Jesus' cross and empty tomb give us real strength to endure, because He did!

C. Then, Verse 3 calls us, **<sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**

1. This tells of Jesus' love for us. And, if Jesus loved us enough to endure the foolishness of rebellious and sinful humans, we can trust Him

2. His forgiveness for our sin, His understanding of our temptations, His salvation for our suffering gives encouragement to keep trusting, keep serving.

III. Hebrews 12 says, **<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,** because chapter 11 talks about Abraham, and Moses, and Rahab, and David and others who endured by faith.

A. We have such examples among ourselves. I visited and talked with Glenna Mitchel on Thursday. She turned 100 in July, and I believe is the oldest member of Our Redeemer. When I visited she knew who I was and was happy to have the Lord's Supper. I

read this verse to her and said, “Anyone who has made it to 100 and continues to trust Jesus has endured.

1. I could mention others present here today, but do not want to embarrass them. You know who has endured. You see how Jesus has been their strength, in spite of the attacks of the world and the temptations to sin.

2. In my life, my pastor and my parents are examples, part of this cloud of witnesses. My mom died in 2011, and my dad missed her terribly till he passed in 2018. We thought he visited her grave every day. The attendant at the cemetery told us, “Sometimes he was here twice a day.” The head elder at the church in Florida once told me, “I went to visit your dad and HE asked me How I was doing? And then he prayed for me.” In the midst of His grief and struggles with life, my dad trusted Jesus. His faith informs me about how Jesus strengthens. His witness encourages me to trust Jesus.

B. How about us?

1. When the world denies there is a God, denies the love of Jesus, yet **we see how He has helped** those in our life. We continue to look for the hand of God, and to share His love with others.

2. When life **tempts us to sin**, we know the price Jesus paid to forgive us, and His love calls us to loving, thankful obedience.

3. When **we fail**, the forgiveness of the cross is real, and we can continue to live as children of God because of His **love and forgiveness** in spite of our failure.

4. When we face our mortality, our own death, the death of another, we can endure the trials of this life, because Jesus has eternal life for us.

CONCLUSION - Our Youth went to a Gathering and studied and heard others call them to endure, to continue in Jesus. Personally, I liked all the speakers, but the one who touched me most was Bethany Hamilton, the Christian surfer who was attacked by a shark and lost her arm. Bethany told the youth that Jesus gave her strength to continue, even when death was lurking. That is God’s call to us today, **‘Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>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.**

## **Epistle - Hebrews 11:17–31; 12:1–3**

<sup>17</sup>By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, <sup>18</sup>of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>19</sup>He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. <sup>20</sup>By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. <sup>21</sup>By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. <sup>22</sup>By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

<sup>23</sup>By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. <sup>24</sup>By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, <sup>25</sup>choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. <sup>26</sup>He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. <sup>27</sup>By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup>By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

<sup>29</sup>By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. <sup>30</sup>By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup>By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. . .

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<sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.