

## **‘He that shall endure’**

In Matthew 24:13 Jesus says, ‘But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.’ We briefly mentioned this verse in the article ‘In the Last Days’, but I want to look at it more closely here.

‘The end’ in this verse is either the end in death – probably under persecution – or the end of the world, see verse 3. Speaking to his disciples Jesus says that ‘he that shall endure’ the affliction and hatred of the world in the last days of time shall be saved. The thing that struck me most about this verse was how the Lord says, ‘but *he* that shall endure’, not ‘they’. In the context of the whole of the last times, when it comes down to the very last days, it seems that there will be relatively few of the Lord’s people left who will be enduring. If Jesus had said, ‘but they that shall endure’, then we would be led to believe that there will be a company of people enduring together, as if they were huddled in mutual encouragement, holding one another up, so to speak, in the last days of great tribulation; but, alas, it doesn’t seem that this will be the case.

Since finishing that article on the last days it has struck me not only how near these things are to taking place, but how hard it is going to be for those who are ‘alive and remain’ until the coming of the Lord. These are going to be days of great affliction, tribulation and persecution for the saints – ‘all nations’ shall hate them, Matt. 24:9 – with many of them being put to death for the truth’s sake, and it seems that the hardness of the times will be further compounded because each will be suffering more or less alone: ‘but *he* that shall endure’.

For those among my readers who, having read the other article have, like me, been alarmed by these things, who not only find that they believe them but increasingly realise that they could very well be a part of them, I am sure that this has caused great searching of heart and an earnest seeking of the Lord to make them ready to face those days. The effect all this has had on me is that I have become quite cast down really; not because I don’t want the end to come but because it is already hard enough being a child of God in the ‘easy’ but benighted times in which we live; it is hard enough having minimal fellowship with other of the Lord’s people in this present wilderness, and is hard enough being

surrounded by Christian professors who have no spiritual conversation, who aren't apparently searching for anything – all being content in their 'religion', such as it is – and who don't really believe that the end is that near anyway. Yes, it is hard enough walking the narrow way more or less alone in the present day of relatively little persecution, without imagining what it will be like being alone in the coming time of great tribulation.

But I have also been cast down because of a renewed realisation of the vanity of all things here – especially of the desires of the natural heart: it remaining painfully true that 'in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing'. And because I am at times so easily side-tracked with certain vanities, the truths of that article have served to put everything back into the stark light of day: that we are not our own, and we can't just live how we please. Just think about it: the reality of the imminence of the end of the world, when not only every material thing will be burnt up, but all our carnal hopes, 'dreams', desires, interests and expectations will suddenly be cut off: the arrival of the day of judgment with, amongst other things, the final open revelation and exposure of all our vanity, hypocrisy and spiritual lethargy; the final realisation that only those who have been *enduring*, and looking for the Lord's appearing, will be saved and be found unashamed before him at his coming, 1 John 2:28.

When you are shown again by the Lord that even those things which are sometimes referred to as 'things indifferent' – although scripture doesn't recognise that phrase or teaching – and when one is led into something of the reality of 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, then how else can one feel but a sense of barrenness, and even dejection, in this world.

Another fruit of having published that article has been much oppression, (we will look at Lot's experience of this in a moment). Someone suggested to me that I had 'upset the devil' by writing it. Satan verily hates the truth, and he hates the people of God; so he attacks them and seeks to grind them down by what the world calls 'depression', but which is actually oppression: 'Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me' is the cry of the saints when they are brought into this snare: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?' But, thanks be unto the Lord, for he does and will come and break the snare with his word, proving again his love for his children; and because they are

exercised in these things and, despite everything, do 'hope in God', then they know that they will 'yet praise him', Psalm 42:5.

But I want to know this: where are the brethren who, in all this, are 'bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ'? Gal. 6:2; and who walk as though they actually do 'see the day approaching'? Heb. 10:25 – a verse which has *nothing* to do with 'going to chapel', by the way. See also 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. Where are the 'provokers' of Hebrews 10:24? Where are the 'fathers' of 1 John 2? – those spiritual elders amongst the out-called to whom we young men and little children can look for matured spiritual wisdom in the things of Christ and his gospel, and long experience of the narrow way? Alas, this present article goes some way to showing why there are hardly any of the above left – and what an indictment that is upon the 'church'.

Something else I said in that article on the last days has come back to mind in this context, which I think needs clarifying. I said that the world would continue until the last soul for whom Christ died was called, and then the end would come: there being no other reason for time to continue. But if there are to be individuals 'enduring unto the end' then this seems to imply that they will have already been called some time before the end. And this is what Paul indicates in Romans 11 – at least, as it pertains to the Gentiles.

In this passage the apostle is writing of the Israelites – the seed of Abraham after the flesh – amongst whom there remaineth 'a remnant according to the election of grace' – verses 1-5 – and those who believe the gospel in 'the world' amongst the Gentiles, verses 11-12. The former he goes on to describe as 'natural branches' and the latter as 'a wild olive tree' grafted in among them, verses 15-24. Israel was the chosen nation, but they fell away, 'were broken off' because of unbelief, and as the gospel went 'into all the world' from Pentecost Gentiles were grafted in. But there is going to come a time – and perhaps this time is just about here already – when Paul says that 'the fulness of the Gentiles will come in', verse 25. This means that the number to be called under the sound of the gospel from among the Gentiles will have reached its completion – no more Gentiles to be called – after which the Lord will turn briefly to the remnant left to be called out from among his ancient people, and then the end will come.

Therefore as far as the Gentiles who are alive in the very last days are concerned, there will indeed be a time when all that is left to them will be an enduring till the end. I ask the reader to meditate and pray over these things to gain more light on them, for I believe there are deep and sobering things here.

Also I would point out some other words of the Lord Jesus to his disciples which may also shed light on the subject at hand and give us another facet of this endurance: ‘The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it’, Luke 17:22. These words were spoken in the context of ‘the days of Noah, and of Lot’: days illustrative of the end of the world – days of endurance for the people of God. How the disciples who are alive in the days of great tribulation, who are enduring, would long to see one of the days of the Son of man: to encourage them, to keep them, to strengthen them, but they will not see it. No. No more days experienced wherein the gathered saints are together in unhindered fellowship, the Lord being with them ‘in the midst’, for now they are scattered, few in number, and each one – ‘he’ – is enduring, holding on, amidst great trials in the last days. Again, aren’t these days forming even as we speak?

But let us consider Noah again in this context. The end of the world will come upon a time ‘as it was in the days of Noah’. But after Noah was commanded to build the ark we do not read of others being called to enter the ark apart from those who had already been ordained to be in it from the beginning. Notice how God told Noah who was going to be in the ark *with* the commandment to build it: ‘But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee’, and none else, Gen. 6:18. Therefore we can see from this that Noah had to endure the rest of the time – years, decades – before the flood came without anyone else apparently being called.

Consider also Lot in Sodom. What was going on in his mind day after wearying day as his righteous soul was vexed – vexed – with the filthy conversation [manner of living] of the wicked, having to witness both by seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds, 2 Peter 2:6-8. Poor Lot didn’t even seem to have an expectation of the imminence of the end of his

vexation, but as a righteous man, a 'godly' man, verse 9, and therefore a man of faith, he surely can be said to have been enduring it until the LORD would somehow come and rescue him out of it.

But what exactly was Lot's vexation? Although the word appears twice in these verses they are different words in the original. In verse seven the word is 'harassed', or, 'oppressed'; while in verse eight it is 'tortured', or 'tormented': the experience of being dragged 'down' to the depths. And this is exactly the effect being in this world has upon the souls of the children of God. We have already heard David cry, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?... Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?... My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?', Psalms 42,43. Again the psalmist had said, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD', Psalm 130. See also Psalm 69. These are the experiences of those who are enduring in this world, not of those who are happily engaged in it.

The love of, friendship with, and a relative contentment in the world is just not compatible with the life of faith, with following Christ, with the walk of the Spirit-filled children of God. This world is a barren place, a wilderness to the saints; they are in daily living reality 'strangers – foreigners – and pilgrims – passers through, not settlers – upon the earth.' The modern profession of Christianity with its easy-believism, fun and fellowship, encouragement of worldly advancement, etc. is not harassed, oppressed, tormented, tortured or dragged down by its living in this world. The offence of the cross and the chastening of the Lord are alien to them, as is the 'wrestling' of Ephesians 6:11-16. Therefore the thought of having to 'endure' is nigh-on irrelevant to them – even though the Jesus they say they believe in says that 'he that shall endure unto the end, the same [only] shall be saved.'

Another thought regarding Lot. The end of the world – the coming again of the Lord Jesus – will happen in a day like 'as it was in the days of Lot'. And if you think about it this confirms the verse and interpretation thereof under consideration: 'he that shall endure', not 'they'. For remember that as there were not found even ten righteous souls in Sodom, so there will be relatively few in the faith left upon earth when the end comes, Genesis 18.

Once again I leave these things for the thoughtful reader to meditate over in the context of the whole. I mention them simply because these thoughts have been going through my mind in the last few weeks while I have been pondering this phrase, 'he that shall endure unto the end.'

### **Enduring**

Of course the operative word in this verse is 'endure', and as we have begun to see, endurance by definition is not easy. It is hard to endure. This is not a light jolly untroubled skipping through the last times to the coming of the Lord in happy 'fellowship'; this is enduring.

But what is it to endure? In what context is endurance found? Well in hardships, of course. One does not have to endure ease. Peace, quietness and safety doesn't need to be endured. That is, living with the daily prospect of sleeping soundly in your own bed at night without threat of molestation from the authorities doesn't call for endurance. Neither does 'receiving thy good things in thy lifetime' need enduring, Luke 16:22-25. No, endurance is only found in the midst of 'persecutions and tribulations' in the way of faith, 2 Thes. 1:4; in the 'hardness' of the way, 2 Tim. 2:3; in 'afflictions' for the gospel's sake, 2 Tim. 4:5; in 'chastening' from the hand of the Lord, Heb. 12:7; in 'grief' experienced for 'suffering wrongfully' because of 'conscience toward God', 1 Peter 2:19; in 'temptation', James 1:12; and in the way of true love 'enduring all things', 1 Cor. 13:7.

Here is the context of real endurance, and most if not all of these should be expected in the 'normal' walk even before we get to the very last days of out-and-out persecution. But how many of us even experience and therefore endure any of these things now in the 'safe' times? But surely if we don't, or if we are avoiding the way of endurance altogether, cp. Matt. 13:20,21, then how can we expect to be among the few who will endure unto the end when the real crisis comes: when certainly the flesh and even our very lives will have to be forsaken if we are to be 'saved'? But if we 'save our lives' now when it costs us so little to do so, then we will have no hope of 'losing our lives' when the time comes to 'be faithful unto death' for Christ and his gospel, see Mark 8:35, Rev. 2:8-11.

But those words of the Lord Jesus in Mark 8 do not even refer specifically to the very last days but to our lives now even in these

relatively untroubled times. We cannot expect suddenly to become those who will lay down our lives for Christ's sake in the last days of persecution when we have not already been walking in that way. Now I am not advocating here the idea of 'practice makes perfect', nor of 'each victory will help you some other to win', but I am pointing out that the teaching of the Lord Jesus to his disciples is that regardless of the times, of the ease or difficulty of the way, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it', Luke 9:23,24.

Now, is this our walk? Is this our daily experience? – even before great tribulation comes? It should be – it *must* be – if we would be called his disciples: for Jesus says, 'whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple', *cannot*, Luke 14:27.

### **Saving our lives**

On one level to 'save our lives' means to live more or less how we please, always seeking to have our own way – what *I* want – never really saying no to self or to our desires. It means always having to have our say, always answering again, having the last word, making sure that others hear what *I* think. Self-promotion, self-justification, self-defence, saving face: these all define 'saving our lives'. And by the way, we can still be saving our lives even when 'giving of ourselves', because deep down it is what we want to do anyway – perhaps to be seen of others to be doing good.

But on a more profound level to save our lives means not to be following Christ; it is not, actually, to be doing the will of the Father; it is to avoid the offence of the cross, and to avoid suffering the loss of all things for Christ. It is to keep out of trouble by not standing for truth's sake; is to shy away from ridicule or persecution for the gospel's sake, and is to dismiss and abhor the idea of being 'crucified with Christ', and therefore of being nothing – dead – in our own eyes.

To save our lives, then, is to seek in some way to 'glory in his presence'. To exercise your free will in salvation; to add your faith to Christ's blood for justification; to work hard for your maturing state of sanctification; to keep yourselves in the Christian pathway by your efforts of faith,

believing and perseverance, is all to glory in the presence – in the very face – of God, and is to ‘save your lives’. But if these God-dishonouring activities are happily continued in then any endurance experienced will not be the same in character to the endurance the Lord Jesus is speaking of in our verse. For self is not dead. Self has not been lost. No. We are the ones working; remember, again, the pleadings of the many on the day of judgment: ‘Have *we* not done...?’ And any endurance experienced by these is because of their own efforts and therefore their own often failings. It is for their sake that they are enduring and not for Christ’s.

But to endure for Christ’s sake is to endure only under his work and his leading. True faith is not doing what we want and asking the Lord to bless or help us in our determination based on some supposed guidance we have gleaned from the Bible. True faith and therefore endurance in the way of faith is hearing his voice and obeying it – regardless of the cost to self; it is receiving a revelation of the Father’s will, falling under it and doing it – regardless of the cost to self; and is continuing to fall under the word and will of God for as long as it takes him to work out his purpose even if, for ages, all things might seem to be running contrary to it. Here is where real endurance for Christ’s sake and for the gospel’s sake is found – regardless of the cost to self.

Take salvation. With many it was just so easy. All they did was to exercise their free will towards Jesus under the tireless efforts of the Spirit to get them to commit. What an instant and relatively simple passing from death to life it was: certainly not something which had to be endured, like David’s ‘In waiting I waited for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry’, Psalm 40:1. Cry? What had they ever cried? They just prayed a prayer! At the close of the meeting when the gospel salesman and the soft music had sufficiently plucked at their heart strings with a sentimental story about the love of Jesus, overcome with emotion and with the warmth of the ‘grace’ so freely offered to them, they bowed their heads and accepted him. Just a simple prayer followed by instant salvation, instant assurance and instant joy. But David said that he had cried unto the LORD, and that he had been crying for quite some time, and that in his crying there was nothing else he could do but to await the LORD’s answer. Nothing so light and straightforward with that saint of God.

David's free will? What free will?! David's salvation was all a work of God: as he goes on to say: 'He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings', verse 2. He did it. The LORD did it. But it wasn't so with these others. When they were 'saved' they did it. God did nothing. No. They prayed, they accepted, they yielded, they believed, and they presumed that God heard and saved them. But he never actually answers them. He says nothing in response to their prayers. He speaks no word into their heart. He doesn't bring them up out of anything that, in their experience, remotely resembles a horrible pit or out from miry clay because they're never found in those states in the first place. No. They were relatively content and untroubled in their lives until they heard about Jesus' love, and about how they were sinners, and how he wanted to save them from going to hell. But they'd never really felt their sin till that moment. Yes, they may have realised that they had done some wrong things: told a few lies, been disobedient to their parents, etc. but these things had never brought them into that horrible pit of despair, or into that miry clay of hopelessness and loss. What about the wrath of God in their soul? What about the thundering voice of the law in the depths of their being? What about the long realisation and terror and horror of being utterly condemned before God? What about having had to endure the hopeless despair they felt as they cried to the LORD, that he might just turn and cease from his raging against them? What about the profound realisation of their inability to believe at all unto salvation, until God give the faith? Free will?! Sinner's prayer?!

No. Being saved: coming into a knowledge of sins forgiven, requires an endurance totally unknown to the modern Christian's way of salvation. He will glory in God's presence by taking some of the credit for having, at least, responded to His desire to save. So the life is spared, is saved, is kept. But Jesus said that whosoever will save his life shall lose it.

And then there is their standing before God: their standing righteous. What do they understand about their justification before the Father? They are 'saving their lives' in this also by saying that it was their faith which justified them: glorying in his presence again. But Paul said that the saints are justified by the blood of Christ, Rom. 5:9. Ah, yes, they say, Christ's blood justifies us when we exercise our faith in him. Then Christ's blood hasn't justified them at all. Their faith in his blood has

justified them, because, they admit, Christ's blood is able to justify them *only* if they add their faith to it. But the song of the redeemed in heaven is that Christ 'wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood...': it is the blood itself that redeemed them, Rev. 5:8,9. So Paul again wrote that the saints have been 'justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus', Rom. 3:24. It is the work of redemption which justifies: and as it is the shedding of the blood that redeems then justification was wrought at the cross when the blood was shed.

This is very important in the context of 'saving our lives'. For if we have a hand in our redemption and justification when we believe, then Christ's blood achieved nothing in actual fact. Salvation is ultimately of the sinner when he believes and 'activates' or makes effective the blood. So in justification the sinner has saved his life by his work of believing, and has not had to lose his life completely upon the work of the Saviour alone to accomplish his justification and redemption for him.

And then there is sanctification. Now that they have believed and are set out on their new Christian pathway of faith, love and good works, they think they are becoming better all the time: getting progressively more sanctified, more holy, as they grow older: keeping the law better, failing less, growing more mature and closer every day to the image of Christ: ever more obedient, ever more spiritual, ever more sanctified. But Paul in his doctrine said that Christ himself was the sanctification of his people, 1 Cor. 1:30. In fact Jude even goes as far as to say that the saints were sanctified by God the Father way before they were even called, Jude 1, so where can their growing holiness be found in that?

To be sanctified is to be holy, and holiness can only exist as an absolute. One is either holy or one is not. To be ninety-nine percent holy is to be unholy for the one percent defiles. But many dismiss this doctrine because they will glory in his presence by seeking to save their lives by their doing good to please God instead of falling totally upon the work of Christ to be all their sanctification and all their holiness before the Father. And what endurance that requires. How? For we are, and always will remain, unholy in and of ourselves, in our flesh, in our experience, in actual fact. Where was Paul's rejoicing in his attaining to greater holiness when he cried, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth

no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not"? Rom. 7:18.

But Paul, what about your preaching, your tribulations, afflictions and suffering for the gospel's sake? What about your separation wholly to the gospel, your suffering the loss of all things for Christ, your continued faithfulness to the truth at great cost to yourself, your flesh and your liberty? What about the years of having continued in this way? What about your love, and patience, and longsuffering for Christ, his truth and his church? What about your continued desire after Christ: to know him and be found in him? Of your desire to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings? Surely, Paul, by now you must have attained to sixty, seventy, eighty percent holiness?

'For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do', verse 19. But, Paul, we're growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Saviour; we're getting more holy every day! 'O wretched man that I am...', cries the man who had more revealed knowledge of the Saviour than the whole mass of these pretenders put together, '...who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Deliver you, Paul? But we're being delivered from our old ways more and more every day – or every Sunday when we go to worship our God, and learn a little bit more about how to be good. But in their working, believing, and striving to be better and make themselves more acceptable in God's sight they are saving their lives and glorying in his presence: the way of true endurance never being known by them.

No. They are keeping themselves. When they are down, they pick themselves up with a nice promise from the Bible. When they err they have a quiet moment of sorrow before God who instantly forgives them because they still 'believe in Jesus' and he still loves them. When they fall into temptation or sin and are perhaps found out they go all coy for a moment before presently saying, 'all my sins are already forgiven anyway, so it doesn't really matter as 'once saved, always saved''. When their conscience pricks them if a jot of real gospel truth strikes them – horror of horrors! – and they feel that they might actually be out of the way, deceived, lost even, then they instantly count it as an attack of the devil and quickly brush it off with another of their favourite assurance texts, and go again on their way rejoicing.

But none of this needs enduring. They are not being kept by the power of God. They are keeping themselves on their broad way. No need for his sustaining upholding hand; no need for the doctrine of the gospel to be opened and revealed to their desperate need; no need for living bread or life-sustaining water to be fed them in the wilderness of this world; no need for the Comforter to draw alongside to minister to them in their felt barrenness – what a dry, tasteless, desolate place this world is! No. No real need to endure this life: little or no sighs, never any cries, no longings to be rescued and released from the confines not only of this present evil world but of their own corrupt nature; never any disappointment felt when they wake up in the morning and discover that they are still here; no desire to see the day of judgment appear, with the final defeat of all their enemies, the burning up of the heavens and the earth and all that in them is, and the creating of a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth only righteousness. No. No real desire for these things at all. Why? Because they love this world, and the things that are in the world. They love their easy, happy, if at times discouraging, religion. They love the flesh, and they love their saviour's ready forgiveness when they fall. They love the Bible, and they love 'the Lord'; and they love the sure and certain hope that when they have lived long and fulfilled lives, gaining most if not all of their desires in this life, then Jesus will appear with smiling face and outstretched arms to welcome them into heaven to be with him for ever. But the trouble is that none of these things calls for endurance, not as in, 'But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.'

### **The Narrow Way**

And so we arrive at the way of real endurance, called by Jesus 'the narrow way', or the 'constricted' way, as the original suggests. For to 'lose our lives for Christ's sake' does take endurance. The word translated 'narrow' indicates that it is a crowded way which is hard to get through. A huge multitude of people is being carried along in one direction while a solitary disciple is battling his way through the midst of them in the opposite direction. It is a narrow way, and if he is to continue to 'swim against the tide' he is going to need endurance. Again, the words 'strait' and 'narrow' indicate such a cramped way that it is like struggling through a tunnel where the walls, floor and ceiling are made of constantly contracting rubber, always closing in on you. A hard way, a

way of battling and fighting through, a way which calls for *endurance*, but a way – the only way, says the Saviour – which ‘leadeth unto life’, unto salvation. Thus the narrow way of Matthew 7:14.

Are you on that way? Do you even desire to be found on such a way? But it is only those who *are* on that way who will be saved in the end, Matt. 24:13. And how have they got onto this way? Only through the strait gate – another ‘narrow’ – having ‘striven’ to get through as well, Luke 13:23,24. As we have seen with David this narrow way of endurance is not easily entered, and certainly cannot be found by way of a wide gate: the wide gate of professed conversion described above. For you must realise that the two gates spoken of by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 7:13,14 are two types of conversion – one easy and straightforward: i.e. false, the other difficult and hard-fought. So often these two gates, leading to the two ways, are portrayed as being entered by either ‘the saved’ – the ‘strait and narrow’, or ‘the lost’, the world – the wide and broad. But they aren’t. The world, the godless, claim no entrance into a profession of Christ at all, and they don’t walk along a ‘Christian’ pathway. But professing Christians do. They are ‘converted’: they enter a gate and walk along a way. But Jesus here teaches that there are in fact two types of gate and two different ways into which those who profess his name enter and walk along.

Therefore it is incumbent upon us who do profess his name to make sure that we have had a proper entrance, and are thus walking on the only way of the two which leadeth unto life. For Jesus said – and we have seen – that there are ‘many’ who have entered easily through the wide gate – by ‘giving their hearts to Jesus’, ‘making a commitment to Christ’, embracing Christianity, giving mental assent to Christian doctrine, or by just being born into a Christian family – who are subsequently walking relatively effortlessly – albeit ‘in his name’ – along the broad way which, as they are yet to discover, actually ‘leadeth to destruction’; while there are only ‘few’ who have striven to enter in at the strait gate. Thus, ‘he that shall endure’, not a whole mass of ‘they’.

You doubt this interpretation? Read the whole passage for yourselves: Matthew 7:13-27. See the either/or constantly repeated indicating true or false professors of Christ: The strait gate/the wide gate. The narrow way/the broad way. False prophets and, by implication, true. Good

trees/corrupt trees. Good fruit/evil fruit. Not every one that saith unto Christ, 'Lord, Lord' are genuine followers/over-against, again by implication, those who likewise do but are. They that 'do the will of the Father'/they that obviously don't. Those who hear these sayings of the Saviour and do them/or do them not. The world isn't in any of these verses: Jesus was teaching his disciples only, Matt. 5:1,2, warning that it was only those amongst them who 'did' his sayings that would enter into the kingdom of heaven.

These then are the ones who will endure, who will endure unto the end and be saved.

But how do they endure? In their own strength and by their own determination? We have already seen that this can never be. How could they? As they have entered the strait gate only by the grace of God, and as they battle along the narrow way as kept by the grace and power of God alone, so they will only endure unto the end by the grace of God. This is not 'works': this is not name-it-claim-it victory-living full-assurance easy-believism. *This is the work of God.* In experience this is hard graft: is self-sacrifice; is the way of the cross. This is through much tribulation for Christ's sake; is the path of mortification of the flesh and of the members; is the path which lives in the constant realisation that 'self' has to be crucified; is a walk which is constantly characterised by 'nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.' This is the path of endurance, daily: continued endurance right up unto the end: 'running [but] with patience', Heb. 12:1.

And of course this is to follow Christ – the Lamb – whithersoever he leadeth. 'My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me.' And as the Saviour 'endured the contradiction of sinners against himself', so will these who follow him, Heb. 12:3. What 'sinners' are these? Why, those on the broad way. The Lord Jesus endured the contradiction of scribes and Pharisees; of the doctors of the law; of the chief priests and the elders; of the Jews: the people: all professedly God's people; all worshippers of Jehovah; all 'Bible'-believers; but all sinners still, all enemies of Christ and his doctrine; all contenders against the true gospel, all devoid of faith, and all having to be endured first, by Christ, and now by those who follow him to the end on the narrow way: the saints.

Now, find me one on that pathway in these self-indulgent days, in what is presumptuously called ‘the church’, and I will show you one who is likely to ‘endure unto the end and be saved’. But I don’t believe you will find one in a thousand, one in ten thousand, which is why the Lord Jesus didn’t say, ‘but *they* that shall endure’, but ‘*he* that shall endure’. After all, he did say that only ‘few there be that find it’.

May these things shake us out of our lethargy, carelessness and slumber, so that we might be found among those few who will endure unto the end, despite the narrowness, the hardness, the tears, and the loneliness of the way.

And yet... we are not alone. For the Lord hath said unto his people, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ The Lord is the health of their countenance, and their God. Behold, he is with them always, even unto the end of the world: *even* unto the end. They shall endure, as seeing him who is invisible. Yes, they may lose their lives literally, they must lose their lives daily, for his sake, but the end is salvation, is glory and honour and immortality, is eternal life, is an incorruptible crown: a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, a crown of glory. And the end is to be ‘forever with the Lord’, for whom, and because of whom, we suffer the loss of all things and endure unto the end.

‘These are they which came out of great tribulation...’, Rev. 7:14.

O Lord, save thy servants that trust in thee.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### **‘...unto salvation...’**

But we cannot leave it there without looking at something of this salvation which those that endure unto the end will receive, and which Peter says is ‘ready to be revealed’, 1 Peter 1:5.

The salvation of God is total. It pertains not only to the saints’ experience in this world – they ‘*are* saved’, but it pertains also to their state at the end of the world – they are *to be* saved. Peter confirms that they are ‘kept [in this life] by the power of God through faith *unto*

salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.’ And this keeping power is ‘the gospel of Christ’, which is the power of God *unto salvation*, to every one that is of the faith, Rom. 1:16. Again, Hebrews 9:27,28 declares: ‘And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; *and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*’

The Lord’s people are saved with ‘an everlasting salvation’, Isa. 45:17: a salvation which pertains primarily to eternity. Having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world – then, in eternity – this eternal election is effectual for eternity. We were not chosen just to be saved in and for time, but for eternity. However much we have experienced – and do experience – the blessings of salvation now, there is a salvation ready to be revealed which is beyond imagination. This salvation will be enjoyed by all the elect in a state which will be devoid of any fleshly hindrance: in a place where there will be no more manifestation of sin; in a place where the Lord will be seen in all his glory, he being no longer ‘invisible’, Heb. 11:27.

Yes, it will be a salvation which translates us out of this body of death into a glorified, sinless body: ‘For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality’, 1 Cor. 15:53. It is a salvation out of this state where everything is under the curse. It is impossible for our natural bodies to live for ever in the realm which is cursed because of sin, for ‘the wages of sin is death’. The world itself is under a curse for man’s sin and must be destroyed before it is made anew. So as our bodies will be new incorruptible bodies – bodies designed to live in the presence of God for ever – so the world must be made new in order that we can live on it in the presence of the Lord. This is what Peter wrote when he said that we ‘look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth [only] righteousness’, 2 Peter 3:13.

John declared the same. At the very end of all things that pertains to time, after the day of judgment and the consigning of all the enemies of the gospel of Christ into the lake of fire, he writes: ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city,

new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

‘And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

‘And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful’, Rev. 21:1-5.

Here we see the end for the people of God of all their endurance: of all their vexation: no more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain; all things experienced on the narrow way. And presently John is to hear that ‘there shall be no more curse’, 22:3, which sums up and overarches all these things. The trials and tribulations, the persecutions and vexation of those who endure are ultimately because of sin in all its manifestations; but then, no more, for ever.

But did you notice also this stupendous fact? That God himself comes and dwells with his people upon this new earth? ‘The tabernacle – the dwelling-place – of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.’ What? God, the eternal one, dwell upon earth? Yes. But not for the first time. Who do you think Jesus of Nazareth was? ‘And the Word was made flesh and dwelt – tabernacled – among us’, John 1:14. Man was from the beginning created to dwell upon earth: his ‘very good’ state before sin entered and marred it. But after the last enemy death is finally and for ever destroyed, not only will man – redeemed man – find himself upon earth, but God himself will come and dwell with him: a new earth, a physical earth, but one existing outside of the time state, in eternity, in God’s presence, for ever.

And to emphasise once more that it is only those who endure in this life who will be saved, and not just those who merely profess and then fall back on their presumptive ‘once saved, always saved’ mantra, regardless of how they live thereafter, we read in Revelation 22:14: ‘Blessed are they

that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ The continual counter to presumption in the doctrine of the gospel is ‘obedience’: ‘Blessed are they that do his commandments’. By this is not meant the Law of Moses, but the Law of the LORD, cp. Psalm 19:7-11: said Jesus, ‘If ye continue *in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed’; ‘Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not *the things that I say*?’; ‘He that heareth *these sayings of mine* and doeth them’; this is to do his commandments. And in so doing, ‘he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved’, and none other.

### **‘...them that look for him...’**

And amidst all this endurance there is one constant which accompanies, and indeed characterises this endurance; and that is a looking for Christ’s coming. We have already read the last two verses of Hebrews 9 which include these words, ‘and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.’ This is a key element to enduring and, if you think about it, is the major stimulus to continue. We endure because we see the end of our endurance: ultimate salvation, ‘unto salvation’, ‘shall be saved’. But that salvation is the appearing of the Lord: and this is what we look for. In fact, this is the separating characteristic between those who just live stoical lives of general ‘endurance’ – as many in this world with or without a Christian profession do – and those who endure suffering and persecution for Christ’s sake specifically, as seeing him who is to come.

The apostles in their writings were always quick to repeat this one point, because it is what kept them amidst all their tribulation: ‘Nevertheless we look’, 2 Peter 3:13. In this chapter Peter was writing of the coming of the day of the Lord and the end of the world, and of the fact that the saints will be surrounded by scoffers and unbelievers. Nevertheless they remain ‘looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God’, verse 12. Earlier he had written of ‘the trial of your faith’, that it will be brought finally to an end by ‘the appearing of Jesus Christ’: ‘wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ’, 1 Peter 1:3-13.

Paul wrote likewise: 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ', Titus 2:11-13. There is endurance and an expectation! And what an expectation! And therefore what necessity to look for it.

To the Corinthians Paul and Timothy wrote of their 'light affliction' of trouble, perplexity, persecutions, and being often cast down; of their 'always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus', of their always being 'delivered unto death for Jesus' sake'; which was constantly overcome by their expectation of 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'; for they were not looking at these things which were seen, but at the things which were not seen: 'for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal', 2 Cor. 4.

To the Philippians the same apostle, with Timothy again, wrote that although they were often plagued by the enemies of the cross of Christ who, amongst other things, 'mind earthly things', yet, 'our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...' Phil. 3:17-21.

Thus in the context of all these things the ultimate exhortation of the Lord Jesus himself is 'Watch therefore', Matt. 24:42. The days are going to become gradually harder for the saints of God upon the earth. As the time is fast approaching when the man of sin is to be revealed: when the whole earth will be of 'one mind' and more or less of 'one tongue', the exhortation of the gospel to the children of God is to watch and be sober, to watch and pray, lest they fall into temptation and a snare; lest they fall into despair and their hearts fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: 'distress of nations, with perplexity', Luke 21:25,26; lest they be deceived by the appearance of a false Christ; lest they begin to rejoice in the world's newly found 'peace and safety'; lest they cease to look up, and lift up their heads when it becomes blatantly obvious that their true *eternal* redemption is drawing nigh.

Be not deceived. Take heed that no man deceive you. Watch. Watch and pray. He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.