

How to Endure Hardship (From 2 Timothy)

by Bryan Gibson

“Be watchful in all things, **endure** afflictions” (2 Timothy 4:5) “You therefore must **endure** hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3).

Hardship for a Christian comes in many forms, and it’s safe to say that Paul, the writer of this letter, experienced nearly every one of them. Let’s go through this letter and identify at least some of the hardships he faced, and then discuss how he endured each one of them.

Hardship #1: Paul had suffered persecution for the gospel’s sake in the past, and he was still suffering when he wrote this letter (1:8, 12; 2:8-9; 3:10-12; 4:14-15).

How did Paul endure this hardship? 1) With the conviction that if anything was worth suffering for, it was the gospel (1:8-11). 2) With the knowledge he was helping others to “obtain the salvation which is in Jesus Christ with eternal glory” (2:8-10). 3) With the confidence that if he endured, he too would receive an eternal reward (1:12; 2:11-12; 4:16-18).

Hardship #2: Paul had been forsaken by some of his own brethren (1:15; 4:10, 16).

How did Paul endure this hardship? 1) By refusing to become bitter (4:16) 2) By not forgetting the ones who did remain faithful—people like Timothy, to whom this letter is addressed; Eunice and Lois, Timothy’s mother and grandmother; Onesiphorous, who was not ashamed of Paul’s chain, and who ministered to him in many ways (1:5, 16-18); and Mark, who was useful to Paul now (4:11), even if not previously (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:36-40). 3) By remembering the one Friend on whom he could always depend—“at my first defense no one stood with me...but the Lord stood with me...” (4:16-17).

Hardship #3: Paul had seen the effects of false teaching, and he knew it was about to get even worse (2:16-18; 3:13; 4:3-4).

How did Paul endure this hardship? 1) By warning Timothy to avoid false doctrine; by encouraging him to hold fast to the truth; by instructing him to study diligently and present the truth accurately; and by charging him to preach the truth at any and every opportunity (1:13; 2:14-16; 3:13-17; 4:2-5). 2) By encouraging him to develop

more teachers who would do the same (2:2). 3) By not giving up on all who had gone astray, because some might receive correction and “come to their senses” (2:24-26).

Hardship #4: Paul was very near death—“for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand” (4:6).

How did Paul endure this hardship? 1) By urging his “beloved son” (1:2), Timothy, “to come to me quickly” (4:9). 2) By preparing himself in advance of his death—“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (4:7). 3) By the hope of “immortality” (1:10) he had in Jesus Christ, the hope that the Lord would give him “the crown of righteousness” (4:8), that the Lord would preserve him for “His heavenly kingdom” (4:18).

“Let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).