

HOLD FAST AND BE POURED OUT:  
ST. PAUL ON THE CHRISTIAN'S ENDURANCE

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## HOLD FAST AND BE Poured OUT: ST. PAUL ON THE CHRISTIAN'S ENDURANCE

In this paper I will survey Paul's doctrine of endurance and will argue that endurance is Paul's imperative for the Christian faith which describes the operative state of the eschatological present. To do this, I will begin by examining the Greek words and their relationship to English before drawing conclusions about ways in which Paul utilizes the words. I then will consider the full breadth of Paul's writings and will attempt to highlight four categories which fill out Paul's thoughts on endurance. The categories of endurance I will seek to distinguish are: enduring suffering, enduring in good works, enduring in sound teaching, and enduring in the faith. I will provide a brief exegesis of two passages, including a translation and logical progression, to discuss this doctrine. Following this I will offer some conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

### **Endurance As An Eschatological Concept**

In English, the word "endure" carries a few meanings, the most general being to carry on through suffering, to undergo, to tolerate, or to continue.<sup>2</sup> Greek verbs, not including nouns and adjectives, Paul uses to communicate the concept of enduring are abundant and vary, depending on the occasion of his argument or metaphor.<sup>3</sup> Various English words do the same: endure, hold

<sup>1</sup>This subject is of interest for the biblical counseling movement, which has much interest in teaching counselees how to endure and how to endure well. My research did not reveal major scholarly discussion upon this subject. Some authors have discussed this subject, notably Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 87–102, discusses Paul's doctrine of endurance in detail and laments that more writers do not actively include it in their Pauline theology, and Marian Free, "Suffering in Paul: A Case for Exaggeration," *St. Mark's Review* 239 (2017): 75–92, who thinks Paul and the early church did not suffer anywhere near as much as early Christian literature claims.

<sup>2</sup>*AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*, s.v. "Endure"; *CONCISE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY*, s.v. "Endure"; *MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE THESAURUS*, s.v. "Endure."

<sup>3</sup>*NIDNTTE*, s.v. "ὑπομένω (Hypomenō)." For a list of verbs and passages Paul uses for the endurance concept, see Appendix A. See the following passages where Paul describes the concept of continuing in a particular action not related to enduring: Rom 1:10, 13; 6:1, 5–14; 7:1–25; 9:2–3; 11:36; 15:30–33; 1 Cor 1:26–31; 2:5; 5:1ff; 6:12–20; 7:1–40; 15:24–28; 2 Cor 3:7–18; 2 Cor 8:16–24; Eph 1, esp. 1:16; 2 Tim 1:1–7; and Phlm 15–16.

fast, keep watch, stand firm, be steadfast, etc. The words do not contain but communicate the doctrine. The doctrine is not a word but a concept.

In English, to endure is a rather passive concept, more akin to waiting out, as mere toleration of circumstances, like the phrase, “grin and bear it.” For Paul, enduring is virtuous and praiseworthy (1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:4), but it is more than Stoic resoluteness. In Rom 5:1–5, justification by faith is the reason for believers enduring suffering, and enduring subsequently leads to character then to hope.<sup>4</sup> Enduring is not surviving hardship; enduring is the overflow of salvation within a person’s heart. In Rom 15:5, Paul says that the OT was written so that “through endurance” Christians might have hope. Paul clearly believes endurance leads to hope (cf. 1 Cor 13:7). Paul further says one of the reasons he endures is the elect’s salvation (2 Tim 2:10; 4:6–8, 16–18; 1 Cor 15:1–19, 57–58). Paul is not infatuated with some romanticized notion of enduring leading to hope, rather enduring culminates in expected salvation. Enduring is not salvific, but an eschatological and instrumental action unto salvation.

From the opposite angle, not to endure is to fall away (1 Cor 10:1–13; 2 Cor 11:16–21a; Col 2:4; cf. Gal 1:6–5:5, in which Paul asserts the Galatians’ failure to endure in his gospel brings danger of falling away). This acute danger is readily apprehended in false teachers (1 Tim 1:1–7, 18–20; 4:1–5; 6:2b–10; 20–21; 2 Tim 1:15–18; 2 Tim 2:14–19; 4:2–6). Those who swerve from the truth and depart the faith, whether teacher or pupil, do not endure actively. Whether positive or negative, enduring is active. There are the faithful who fight on, and there are those who stop fighting.<sup>5</sup> For Paul, becoming a part of the new creation means holding fast until final glorification. Enduring is the Christian’s operative state, and is indicative of salvation.

<sup>4</sup>All Scripture notations are based on the ESV unless noted otherwise. This passage is exegeted below.

<sup>5</sup>*NIDNTTE*, s.v. “ὑπομένω (Hypomenō)”, notes a positive and a negative use to ὑπομένω, as the term was a moral one for early Greeks, and Jewish literature adds the idea of hope to the word, as seen in the LXX, too.

## Categories Of Endurance

Broadly, Paul's doctrine of endurance has four categories within the positive/negative pattern that reflect their eschatological and soteriological character.

### Enduring Suffering

The most easily recognized category of enduring is to persist through persecution, hardship, trials, or other sufferings.<sup>6</sup> Paul frequently rehearses the apostles suffering for the gospel and on behalf of Christians (1 Cor 4:8–13; 9:1–23; 2 Cor 1:8–11; 4:7–18; 6:1–13; 7:1ff; Gal 5:7–15; Eph 3:1, 13; Phil 1:12–26; Col 1:24–2:5; 1 Thess 1:4–10; 2:1–16; 2 Tim 1:8–14; 2:1–10).<sup>7</sup> This suffering validates the apostles' ministry (2 Cor 11:21b–12:10) by indicating sincerity<sup>8</sup> and comforts believers awaiting glorification (2 Cor 5:1–10).<sup>9</sup> Paul says that he suffers because he preaches justification by faith (Gal 5:7–15).<sup>10</sup> Likewise, he says the church's suffering witnesses and testifies to Christ when done without grumbling (Phil 2:14–18). Paul's enduring

<sup>6</sup>See William Van Arragon and Mark Sandle, "Toward a Practice of Christian Antihistory: Writing the Antihistory of Soviet Communism," *Fides Et Historia* 46.2 (2014): 85–99, for a Christian approach to history that seeks to incorporate suffering.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 87–102, includes an entire chapter on Paul's ministry and attendant suffering. On 90, "Before 2 Corinthians was written, then, Paul was already arguing that suffering did not *disqualify* him from ministry. Instead, his suffering *legitimated* his ministry, for his response to his afflictions showed that he was empowered by the Spirit." Emphasis original.

For an analysis of this theme in First Peter and James, see Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn, "Endurance Unto Salvation: The Witness of First Peter and James," *Word & World* 35.3 (2015): 231–40.

<sup>8</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 88–89, 92–93, notes that his accusers said the opposite: his suffering disqualifies him. On 93, "Paul's suffering does not undercut the legitimacy of his message; it testifies to its authenticity and truth."

<sup>9</sup>Commenting on 2 Cor 1:3–7, Schreiner, *Paul*, 95, writes, "He does not say that the Corinthians also comfort Paul. Paul as an apostle fills a unique role in transmitting comfort and salvation to his converts through his suffering. Hence, his sufferings do not disqualify him from his apostolic office but are the means by which God's Spirit is poured out in the lives of his converts."

<sup>10</sup>While I disagree with his interpretation of Paul's thoughts on persecuting Christians prior to his conversion, Louis Berkhof, *Paul the Missionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans-Sevensma, 1915), 12–14, writing on Paul's preparation for missionary work, says that following Paul's conversion, "He knew no higher aim in life than to work for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to the glory of God; than to suffer with and for the sake of Him Who gave His life a ransom for many,—a ransom too for the erring Paul; than, if need be, to lay down his life a consecrated sacrifice on the altar of obedience to his heavenly Lord." Related to this, see Schreiner, *Paul*, 95–96, for an intriguing interpretation of 2 Cor 2:14–17 in which Christ leads Paul as the object of conquest in procession.

through suffering is an eschatological sign against an over-realized eschatology.<sup>11</sup>

With Christ and the apostles setting the example of suffering, Paul states believers are “granted” suffering because of belief, which engages them in Paul’s conflicts (Phil 1:29–30).<sup>12</sup> Similarly, he praises the Thessalonian church’s endurance as a type of his own enduring (1 Thess 2:17–3:13). Enduring suffering is praiseworthy because it holds fast to Paul’s beliefs about salvation (1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 1:4). Further, the Christian faces suffering in hope of adoption and future glory (Rom 8:18–30; cf. 1 Thess 4:13–18; 5:1–11).<sup>13</sup> This connection between suffering, endurance, and salvation enables Paul to describe the church as rejoicing in sufferings (Rom 5:3) because it is rejoicing in salvation (5:1–2). He tells the Philippians endurance is a “clear sign...of [their] salvation, and that from God” (Phil 1:27–28).

Paul’s doctrine of endurance understands that those who follow Jesus persevere not by Stoic determination, but God’s grace producing stalwart character through a Christian’s suffering (Rom 5:1–5).<sup>14</sup> It is God who enables a Christian to withstand trials (1 Cor 10:13; cf. 1 Cor 10:1–14).<sup>15</sup> Attacks of the enemy are opposed when one is strong in the Lord (Eph 6:10–20) and that strength when enduring suffering engenders confidence in believers who witness the sufferer

<sup>11</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 92–93. “But apostolic existence and, yes, Christian existence as well are characterized by foolishness (in the eyes of the world), weakness and dishonor.” For a contrary view, see Free, “Suffering in Paul”, who argues Paul exaggerates his sufferings and suffered no physical persecution, just heckling. Such an exaggeration would ignore how the Roman empire handled revolutionary Jews and discredit the stoning of Stephen, which Paul spearheaded, let alone seeing Paul as basically lying, though Free sees this last point as rhetorical. Her citing E. P. Sanders for understanding Jewish views contemporary to Paul may explain some of this.

<sup>12</sup>In Rom 9:19–29, God endures vessels of wrath to show the elect mercy.

<sup>13</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 272–73, “afflictions are God’s destined pathway... sufferings are the gateway to endurance... sufferings of life are the crucible from which emerges godly character... In a paradoxical way suffering actually produces more hope.”

<sup>14</sup>Naomi A. Bock et al., “The Role of Attachment to God and Spiritual Self-Awareness in Predicting Evangelical Christians’ Appraisals of Suffering,” *MHRC* 21.4 (2018): 353–69. This psychological study evaluated how certain personalities respond to suffering and found that those who practice forms of “mindfulness” and “spiritual awareness” are more likely to perceive suffering as a positive life event.

<sup>15</sup>See Michael Allen, *Sanctification*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *New Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 257–86, for a discussion of grace and discipline, or the third use of the Law. Allen begins his discussion with a focus on suffering and the Christian being disciplined in suffering.

(Phil 1:12–14). Thus the example of Christ and the apostles sets the agenda for believers, and believers' own suffering encourages their brothers and sisters (1 Thess 1:5, 7).<sup>16</sup> Believers endure together because they suffer together (1 Cor 12:26).

God gives suffering, prepares for suffering, and cares for Christians undergoing suffering. Paul writes that when the Corinthians endure suffering, they share God's comfort and care with the apostles (2 Cor 1:6b–7). God comforts Christians when they suffer so they may comfort others, but even this comfort regards salvation (2 Cor 1:3–6a).

### Enduring In Good Works

Paul's doctrine of enduring also demands good works.<sup>17</sup> Paul clarifies that Christian freedom is for doing good works, not sin, leading to eternal life (Rom 6:15–23).<sup>18</sup> This endurance of good works is an obedience of the heart for the present age (Rom 6:17).<sup>19</sup> Against works-based righteousness, Paul argues "patience in well-doing" leads to glory (Rom 2:7), yet Paul introduces a problem here. While good works can procure true circumcision and salvation, he argues that the circumcision of the flesh cannot grant salvation if someone sins (Rom 2:26; 3:3; 4:14). The great problem for everybody, circumcised or uncircumcised, lays in their unceasing, enduring wicked deeds (Rom 3:10b–18). Anyone who would claim salvation by the law is cut off at the knees (cf. 5:5a), but Christ was obedient perfectly in good works, and thus Christ can give

<sup>16</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 89–90, "The integrity of Paul and his colleagues was reflected in their response to suffering, in that they responded to afflictions with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit."

<sup>17</sup>See Canons of Dordt 5.13. Schreiner, *Paul*, 251–70, discusses the eschatological reality of the Christian life in the indicative/imperative paradigm.

<sup>18</sup>For a helpful discussion of progressive sanctification and how works fit into a Christian's salvation, see the first chapter of *Transformation: The Heart of Paul's Gospel*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 7–44. "What we do between our profession of faith or the strange warming of our hearts or being 'born again' (however we conceptualize the beginning of our faith journey) and the end of our lives is important in God's sight. What we do today, tomorrow, and the day after has everlasting significance," deSilva, *Transformation*, 38. He also includes a section on Christian living and doing good works on pages 50–62.

<sup>19</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 252–54, points to Rom 12:1–2 as indicating that Christian transformation begins in the mind, which, for the purpose of my thesis would mean that Christian endurance flows from a change in beliefs, as argued in this paper. The fancy word for the necessity of obedience in this life is parenesis, an ethical exhortation.

righteousness and life to the faithful in him (Rom 5:18–21). The Jews, though cut off, will be given a remnant by God’s grace (Rom 11:1–10), for those who fall away are not genuine believers but go on sinning (1 Cor 11:17–34). Paul further undercuts any notion of salvation by works when he says that our endurance in Christ is pointless if Christ did not rise (1 Cor 15:29–34),<sup>20</sup> indicating salvation is not based in works but that works flow from it. Because Christ endured suffering, Paul says believers can continue to love one another (Phil 2:1–11). Believers thus should not be like unbelievers who persist in sinning (Eph 4:17–24), lest their endurance be disqualified by failing to hold to Christ (Col 2:16–19). It is not endurance for endurance’s sake, and it is not endurance which produces salvation, but holding fast to Christ produces endurance. Believers are to endure as faithful until the end that they might win the prize (1 Cor 9:24–27; cf. Phil 3:7–4:1, especially Phil 3:12–14, 17–4:1).<sup>21</sup>

Much then like endurance in suffering, endurance in good works is by God’s grace. God will enact judgment on those who resist him and he keeps his people enduring in faith and good works (2 Thess 1:5–12). It is God who strengthens Paul with contentment (Phil 4:10–13). God will “bring about the obedience of faith” by strengthening the believers through Paul’s gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ (Rom 16:25–27). Christ sustains believers as guiltless in their obedience (1 Cor 1:1–9). The Spirit produces good works (Gal 5:16–26) and salvation, for which Christians are to strive (Phil 2:12–13). Because this endurance comes from the Spirit, ascetic practices are of no benefit to the believer (Col 2:20–23; 1 Tim 4:1–5).

<sup>20</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 93, “That suffering characterizes this age instead of the age to come is also communicated in 1 Corinthians 15:30–32, where Paul indicates that enduring suffering and pain is senseless if there is no future resurrection. He might as well pursue happiness in this world and try to escape all pain if the resurrection is untrue.”

<sup>21</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton, NJ: Geerhardus Vos, 1930), 62–71, discussed Paul’s teachings on eschatological rewards as perfectly compatible with his doctrine of justification by faith. He defends Paul against charges of hedonism, arguing that Paul’s doctrine is wholly other than the selfish mindset of modern man.

As should be clear, endurance in good works does not produce salvation but is wholly tied up in our salvation. As a prisoner of the Lord, Paul urges Christians to walk faithfully (Eph 4:1; cf. Col 4:2–4; cf. 1 Thess 5:12–22 where Paul gives a litany of actions the believers should do, including praying without ceasing and giving thanks in all circumstances and holding fast to what is good). Women are to endure for their salvation in child-bearing, faith, love, holiness, and self-control (1 Tim 2:15). True widows endure in hope and prayer and younger widows should marry to not be led astray by passion (1 Tim 5:5, 11–12). Believers are to be living sacrifices which endure in doing good works (Rom 12:1ff). Christians are to endure the government, not resisting them (Rom 13:1–7), and they are to walk in the light of the day which is nearly over (Rom 13:8–14). Those who are good stewards will endure in faithfulness (1 Cor 4:2). Believers ought then to be careful how they build as only righteous works will endure (1 Cor 3:10–15), and the works which especially endure are faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:8–13, especially 13:7). These good works are found also in the believers being patient and forgiving one another (Eph 4:2; Col 3:12–13). Likewise, the minister is to be known for patiently enduring evil (2 Tim 2:24).

Related to enduring in good works is enduring in building up fellow believers.<sup>22</sup> What believers eat will not affect their salvation (1 Cor 8:8), but how a believer eats could cause other brothers to stumble and therefore fall away or into despair (1 Cor 8:1ff; Rom 14:1–15:7).

Believers do this by surrendering their liberties on behalf of weaker brethren.

Paul also instructs believers to beware of evil in the world, but to face it boldly and not be found opposing the truth (2 Tim 3:1–9). Believers are to watch out for “those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that [they] have been taught.” Such people serve their appetites and deceive “by smooth talk and flattery the hearts of the naive.” These false brothers Paul associates with evil works and the evil one (Rom 16:17–18, 20a). Believers

<sup>22</sup>This section also bears relevance for the next section on enduring in sound teaching.



must resist them through good and innocent obedience until God crushes Satan (Rom 16:19–20).

### Enduring In Sound Teaching

In addition to good works, believers need to maintain sound teaching (Titus 2:11–15). Many fall away in the evil age for various reasons: false teachers preaching a false gospel (Gal 1:6–10; 2:4–5, 17–21; 3:1–6; 3:8–20; 5:1; 1 Tim 1:3–7; 2 Tim 1:15–18; Tit 1:10–16),<sup>23</sup> listening to the buttery smooth language of false teachers (2 Cor 11:16–21a), abandoning the faith as enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil 3:17–19), the love of money (1 Tim 6:2b–10), false knowledge (1 Tim 6:20–21), irreverent babble (2 Tim 2:14–19), being opposed to good teaching and having itching ears (2 Tim 4:2–6), or the various reasons throughout the whole of the OT, notably, idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ, and complaining (1 Cor 10:1–13). With so many warnings, believers are yet of good courage because they have been reconciled by Christ, which leads them to live for him and not themselves like those who go astray (1 Cor 5:11–15; Gal 2:17–21). The veracity of and holding to Paul’s gospel is required for salvation and endurance (1 Cor 15:1–11), an otherwise pointless endeavor if Christ did not rise (1 Cor 15:12–19), but since Christ has risen, believers endure (1 Cor 15:57–58). In the hope of a future perfection Paul prays for the Colossians’ perseverance of faith in the gospel (Col 1:3–14), for his ministry is proclaiming God’s gospel for the church’s perfection (Col 1:24–29). His concern is that no false teacher would “delude” them (Col 2:4) and that their firmness of faith in Christ would remain (Col 2:5). The Philippians were to imitate Paul in knowing Christ to obtain the power of his resurrection and perfection (Phil 3:1–4:1). Because the Philippians endured much for the sound teaching of the gospel, they were praised by the apostle (Phil 1:7–11), and Paul

<sup>23</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 99, “When Paul inquires whether the Galatians have had a spell cast over them since they fail to see Jesus as the crucified one (Gal 3:1), he probably has in mind his own suffering as a corollary to Christ’s. If they reject his gospel, which he announced as the suffering apostle, then they will also reject the crucified one.” Note how there have been false teachers in the past two sections and this one; unlike true apostles, the false teachers do not suffer for their gospel; false teachers teach that good works earn salvation and they are overcome through good works.

writes something similar in 2 Thess 2:13–17 where he asserts God enables his saints to persevere. The churches thus need good teachers and elders who will hold fast to sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:12–20; 4:6–18; 6:1–16; 2 Tim 2:14–19; 3:10–17; 4:2–6; Tit 1:9; 2:2). Sound teachers help believers to “continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that [they] heard” (Col 1:23).

### Enduring In The Faith

Endurance in suffering, good works, and sound teaching, but more generally in the faith,<sup>24</sup> are necessary for salvation. Therefore it is necessary to preach the faith (Rom 10:5–21). Paul prays for steadfastness (Rom 15:8–13) and he commands it (1 Cor 16:13–14). Endurance is possible because: the Spirit produces life in suffering (Rom 8:12–17), inseparability from Christ (Rom 8:31–39), God enables (2 Tim 4:14–18), establishes, and seals believers (2 Cor 1:21–22), God’s love and Christ’s steadfastness (2 Thess 3:1–5), Abraham’s and Paul’s examples (Rom 4:18–20; 2 Tim 4:6–8),<sup>25</sup> and the warning illustration of unbelieving Israel cut off and the fear of being cut off even after being grafted in (Rom 11:11–24). All of this is confidently fixed in the believer’s faith because the Spirit perfects what he begins (Phil 1:3–7). Perseverance in the faith is given by God and the hope of salvation “animates” Christian perseverance.<sup>26</sup> “If [the Christian] endures, [he] will also reign with him” (2 Tim 2:12).

### Sample Exegesis: Rom 5:3–5

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, also through whom we have access<sup>27</sup> [by faith] into this grace in which we stand and boast<sup>28</sup> in

<sup>24</sup>The aspect I am describing in brief here is the doctrine of the preservation of the saints, or, the perseverance of the saints. See Canons of Dort 5.1ff and WCF 17.

<sup>25</sup>Bunyan’s exposition of 2 Tim 4:6–8 found in “Paul’s Departure and Crown,” in *Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, vol. 1 of *Works of John Bunyan* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006), 721–42, contains a useful discussion of Paul’s understanding of what he must suffer for belief in his gospel.

<sup>26</sup>Schreiner, *Paul*, 271–72.

hope of the glory of God. But not only, but also we boast on account of<sup>29</sup> afflictions, having known that affliction brings about steadfast endurance,<sup>30</sup> and steadfast endurance proven character, and proven character hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Therefore,...

having been justified by faith,  
... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
also through whom we have access [by faith]  
into this grace in which we stand and boast  
in hope of the glory of God.  
But not only, but also we boast on account of afflictions,  
having known that affliction brings about steadfast endurance,  
and steadfast endurance proven character,  
and proven character hope.  
And hope does not disappoint,  
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit  
who has been given to us.

Having finished discussing man's imperfection (Rom 3:23) and receiving righteousness through faith not works (4:1–23), Paul declares that believers “have been justified through faith” and are reconciled to God by Jesus (5:1). Faith is God's instrument in believers to bring believers through Christ “into this grace” (5:2).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 216, notes “access” means to the audience of the king.

<sup>28</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., vol. 1 of *ICC* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 259, prefers “exultant rejoicing, jubilation” and defaults his translation to “exult.” I have maintained “boast” here to show the kind of boasting of which Paul does approve.

<sup>29</sup>Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, New. (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 209–10, “The words *καυχόμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν* do not mean that we glory in the midst of afflictions, but on account of them.” He gives these three as reasons for such rejoicing: it is “an honor to suffer for Jesus,” sufferings are “the occasion of manifesting his power in their support and deliverance,” and suffering is God's instrument for “sanctification and preparation for usefulness here, and for heaven hereafter.”

W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament: Commentary* (New York: George H. Doran, n.d.), 2:623, also notes that the passage is not about being in tribulations but also that the Christians are suffering.

<sup>30</sup>Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament: Commentary*, 2:624, remarks that “steadfast endurance” in my translation “has more of the sense of bravery and effort than the English ‘patience’: it is not so passive.”

<sup>31</sup>John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: IX,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Walker et al., vol. 11 of *NPNF 1*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature, 1889), 396–97, “Why even the very evils of this time present are able to brighten up our countenances, and make us find in them even our repose.”

Paul segues into this passage through the notion of rejoicing; Christians rejoice in hope of future glory *and* they rejoice in suffering (5:2–3a).<sup>32</sup> Paul then delivers a quick argument for how sufferings produce hope,<sup>33</sup> the opposite of one’s expectations.<sup>34</sup> This is made possible because the hope is built on God’s unchanging promises, not spontaneous feeling or “unsound hopes.”<sup>35</sup> Thus he connects suffering to the hope of future glory which “does not put us to shame” (5:3b–5a).<sup>36</sup> Yet this chain of sanctification<sup>37</sup> is further objective, as God has given his people his love in their hearts through the giving of the Holy Spirit (5:5b). The Trinity’s gracious actions are connected

<sup>32</sup>Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, American Edition., vol. 25 of *Luther’s Works* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999), 44, asserts in his 1515–1516 lectures the sufferings are “confusion and persecution.” He also describes suffering as exercising and perfecting endurance, not just producing. He further comments, “for those who do not stand firmly it works lack of endurance.”

Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God’s River: Rom 5:1–11* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1959), 2:72–73, sees the sufferings as being the general sufferings of mankind, not persecution, and he argues Christians were the first to ask, “How can we press joy from sorrow as one presses wine from grapes or oil from olives?” On 96–97 he does make a connection to persecution. Contra Barnhouse, Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1973), 94, see these sufferings as those the early Christians would suffer for transitioning into the last days. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1996), 302–3, Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT 6, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 255–56, and Grant R. Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 137, see it as both.

John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. John Owen, Calvin’s Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 190, “By saying that the saints glory in tribulations, he is not to be understood, as though they dreaded not, nor avoided adversities, or were not distressed with their bitterness when they happened. . . .” Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, New. (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 209, “Since our relation to God is changed, the relation of all things to us is changed. Afflictions, which before were the expressions of God’s displeasure, are now the benevolent and beneficent manifestations of his love.”

<sup>33</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, New Covenant Commentary (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 70–71, points out that the hope mentioned in 5:2 is linked to Abraham’s hope of resurrection in Rom 4:18 and his hope in suffering (Rom 4:19).

<sup>34</sup>Chrysostom, “Romans: IX,” 397, “For tribulations are in their own selves a goodly thing. How so? It is because they anoint us unto patient abiding. . . . For since it was tribulations above all that made them give up the hopes of things to come, and which cast them into despondency, he says that these are the very reasons for confidingness, and for not desponding about the things to come, for ‘tribulation,’ he says, ‘worketh patience.’”

<sup>35</sup>Chrysostom, “Romans: IX,” 397, “No such lot is ours; our hope is sure and unmoveable. For He Who hath made the promise ever liveth, and we that are to be the enjoyers of it, even should we die, shall rise again, and there is absolutely nothing which can put us to shame, as having been elated at random, and to no purpose, upon unsound hopes.”

<sup>36</sup>Keener, *Romans*, 71, on shame, cites Ps 119:116.

<sup>37</sup>Calvin, *Romans*, 190, “To prove this he takes his argument from the effects, and adopts a remarkable gradation, and at last concludes, that all the sorrows we endure contribute to our salvation and final good.”

to the Christian's hope of salvation,<sup>38</sup> and since Christians rejoice in that expected hope, their salvation produces endurance which holds firm against all odds until their perfection.<sup>39</sup>

Paul's language is bold and confident; he emphasizes the positive aspect of endurance within negative circumstances. He is not praising endurance, but is praising its cause: God's reconciling act, and he encourages Christians with gospel truths to spur them on to holding the faith firm.<sup>40</sup> Suffering is not minimized or called illusory, but is dwarfed in the light of future hope and God's abiding love in the Spirit.<sup>41</sup> The passage highlights endurance in suffering and in the faith, and to a lesser degree in good works when he mentions producing "proven character."

### Sample Exegesis: First Corinthians 9:24–27

Have you not known that in a stadium all are running on the one hand run, but one receives the prize? Like him<sup>42</sup> run in order that you may win! And every competitor exercises self-control in all, so that those on the other hand may win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable. Therefore I in this way run as not aimlessly, I in this way box as not beating air, but I discipline and subjugate<sup>43</sup> my body,<sup>44</sup> lest after preaching to others I myself should become disqualified.

<sup>38</sup>Calvin, *Romans*, 190, "for how does he prove that adversities do not hinder the glorying of the faithful, except that by their patience in enduring them, they feel the help of God, which nourishes and confirms their hope?"

<sup>39</sup>Chrysostom, "Romans: IX," 398, "Now had He not been willing to present us after our labors with great crowns, He would never have given us such mighty gifts before our labors. But now the warmth of His Love is hence made apparent, that it is not gradually and little by little that He honors us; but He hath shed abroad the full fountain of His blessings, and this too before our struggles. And so, if thou art not exceedingly worthy, despond not, since thou hast that Love of thy Judge as a mighty pleader for thee. For this is why he himself by saying, 'hope maketh not ashamed,' has ascribed everything not to our well-doings, but to God's love."

<sup>40</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, ed. James Moffatt, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932), 73, says that this endurance was improperly termed sanctification by the Reformation.

Barnhouse, *God's River*, 2:92–93, says the call is to "produce good works... which flow out of salvation."

<sup>41</sup>W. Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3rd ed., ICC (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1897), 125, "The overwhelming sense of God's mercy and love fills him with such exultation of spirit that bodily suffering not only weighs like dust in the balance but positively serves to strengthen his constancy."

<sup>42</sup>I follow Robertson Archibald and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 1911), 194, here for my translation of "Like him."

<sup>43</sup>Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), 169, translates this literally to "lead about as a slave."

<sup>44</sup>Notably he does not use *σάρξ* here but *σῶμα*. Hodge, *First Corinthians*, 169, on the other hand, and I

Have you not known  
     that in a stadium all...  
                     who are running on the one hand  
         ...run,  
     but one receives the prize?  
         Like him run in order that you may win!  
     And every competitor exercises self-control in all,  
     so that those on the other hand may win a perishable crown,  
         but we an imperishable.  
 Therefore I in this way run as not aimlessly,  
 I in this way box as not beating air,  
 but I discipline and subjugate my body,  
     lest...  
         after preaching to others  
     ...I myself should become disqualified.

Paul has made a defense of his apostolic position and rights, neither of which he used (1 Cor 9:1–12a, 15–17). He did not use them because he did not want to put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ, that the gospel would be preached “free of charge”, which meant he had been required to “endure anything” (9:12b, 18). Paul therefore says he humbles himself unto the status of any man “that by all means [he] might save some” and “for the sake of the gospel, that [he] may share with them in its blessings” (9:19–24), which is connected backwards to Paul’s discussion of the weak brother.<sup>45</sup> In 1 Cor 10:1ff he describes how the Israelites in the Exodus became disqualified for lack of discipline. They did not endure their trials, but Paul encourages the Corinthian church that God’s grace will enable them to “endure” their trials (1 Cor 10:13).

think he is at best partially right, sees Paul as disciplining his sinful nature. He argues that Paul does not just mean “his sensual nature...but all the evil propensities and passions of his heart.” A better interpretation would align this passage with the strong/weak concept and Paul directing his efforts towards the gospel, not his own liberties.

More in line with his own cultural context, John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians: XXIII,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Hubert Kestell, John Medley, and Talbot A. Chambers, vol. 11 of *NPNF 1* (New York: Christian Literature, 1889), 132, sees this as about a good use of monasticism and asceticism in curtailing one’s sensual desires, which he backs up with the Corinthians’ behavior. Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: Commentary*, 2:856, argues Paul’s discipline comes “in a positive degree—not mere abstinence, but vigorous *control* of appetite and passion.” Emphasis original.

<sup>45</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 1:309–10.

Paul's "necessity" to proclaim the gospel (9:16) is thus explained as a type of endurance through athletic metaphors (24–25). The metaphors were meant to direct the Corinthians' efforts towards their proper target, towards which Paul says they are not striving.<sup>46</sup> Paul utilizes the example of his preaching (9:1–23) to address the need for endurance in all good works (10:1ff).<sup>47</sup> Paul expresses that part of his motivation in discipling himself as Isthmian athletes trained is so he is not disqualified from the faith (9:27).<sup>48</sup> Paul trains with purpose (cf. 9:26) and seeks what he elsewhere called "the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:14).<sup>49</sup> The Corinthians' problem is that they have grown lax, or at least are aiming only as high as their desires and appetites.<sup>50</sup> Paul's application of this is to discipline one's body.<sup>51</sup>

Paul employs the positive and negative aspects of endurance, emphasizing the positive.

<sup>46</sup>Chrysostom, "First Corinthians: XXIII," 132, sees Paul's assertions about aimless training for the Olympics as saying the Corinthians' current practices are aimless, to their shame. Hodge, *First Corinthians*, 168, argues the boxing metaphor is not about training against the air, but as if the boxer missed his opponent in a fight. So also Archibald and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 196.

Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:310, does not understand this passage to be about assurance of salvation or the perseverance of the saints but Paul setting before the Corinthians' efforts their proper target and goal. Alternatively, Hodge, *First Corinthians*, 169, sees the passage as Paul being afraid of becoming a reprobate, after spending himself preaching the gospel to others only to fall away. He writes, "The reckless and listless Corinthians thought they could safely indulge themselves to the very verge of sin, while the devoted apostle considered himself as engaged in a life-struggle for his salvation... It is the indolent and self-indulgent Christian who is always in doubt."

<sup>47</sup>Chrysostom, "First Corinthians: XXIII," 131, "Now this he saith, not as though here also one only out of many would be saved; far from it; but to set forth the exceeding diligence which it is our duty to use... so likewise here it is not sufficient to believe, and to contend in any way; but unless we have so run as unto the end to show ourselves unblameable, and to come near the prize, it will profit us nothing."

Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:310, adds "all the duties of piety."

<sup>48</sup>Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:311, understands Paul to say that he does not want to be known as a hypocrite.

<sup>49</sup>Hodge, *First Corinthians*, 167–68, connects the prize to the Greek conception of immortality for reference. He then argues that Paul's meaning is if the ancients did extreme discipline for something fleeting, how much more the Christian should be disciplined.

<sup>50</sup>Calvin, *Corinthians*, 1:308–9, argues that Paul's point is that all previous striving is worthless unless the goal is reached. He also comments, "Thus one [Christian] does not hinder another: nay more, those who run in the Christian race are mutually helpful to each other."

<sup>51</sup>Archibald and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 197, connect this to horses pulling a chariot.

The positive is found in the victor's crown; the negative in the threat of disqualification.<sup>52</sup>

Endurance is not for the spiritual elite alone but the whole-church and the individual Christian all run until judgment on the Last Day. The categories Paul uses are endurance in good works and endurance in the faith, and to a lesser degree endurance in suffering, based on the context of Paul doing whatever is necessary for the gospel, and also to a lesser degree endurance in sound teaching, given his emphasis on apostleship and preaching in the context.

### **Conclusion**

Since there was no way to determine Paul's doctrine of endurance by words alone, it was necessary to begin identifying broad concepts in the way he discussed endurance. Based on Paul's positive and negative uses of endurance for Christian living, Paul sees the concept as extremely active, not a passive waiting out. Positively, the one who endures fights through suffering, perseveres in good works, holds firm to sound teaching, and maintains the faith until eternal life is won; negatively, the one who resigns ceases caring, turns again to sin, adopts false teaching, and reaps eternal death.

In the categories, it was seen that Paul's doctrine is more extensive than enduring in suffering, yet suffering always lies close at hand. The Christian must also persevere in good works, sound teaching, and holding the faith itself. Endurance is strongly related to hope and faith, both subjects with inherent eschatological aspects, but based on my analysis, one can endure *in* hope and faith. Endurance is not the fourth of Paul's faith, hope, and love triad but a separate command shaping how faith, hope, and love are understood in the light of future salvation. This eschatological component enables the command to endure to exist comfortably in a Christian's present dilemmas and offers Christians practical help for how to deal with troubles.

<sup>52</sup>In their application section, Derek R. Brown and E. Tod Twist, *1 Corinthians*, ed. John D. Barry and Douglas Mangum, Lexham Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2013), write, "Those who fail to train will not win the race or flourish as a Christ-follower...Disqualification remains a risk until the race is complete. Christians are called to a lifetime of obedience to Christ, not a season."



The pastor who incorporates the doctrine in his preaching and the biblical counselor who incorporates the doctrine in his counseling must utilize the doctrine for the building up, sanctifying, and protecting of the Church, not placating or disregarding her troubles, and should be targeted at both present labors and future glorification. Sound teachers must not instruct their hearers only but must ensure their own endurance is not compromised nor swerving from Paul's gospel. A good teacher will understand with Paul "that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us...For in this hope we were saved... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Rom 8:18, 24a, 25).

## APPENDIX A: ENDURANCE

Based on the point Paul is making, the accompanying instruction to a command or example, or the metaphor he employs, Paul utilizes various words to communicate what I believe to be his doctrine of endurance. The verbs which more directly communicate his idea of enduring and their passages I identified are the following:

- ἀνέχομαι (1 Cor 4:12; 2 Thess 1:4; 2 Tim 4:3)
- ἐπέχω (Phil 2:16; 1 Tim 4:16)
- ἐπιμένω (Rom 11:22, 23; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 4:16)
- ἴστημι (1 Cor 15:1; Eph 6:13)
- κακοπαθέω (2 Tim 4:5)
- κατέχω (1 Cor 15:2)
- κρατέω (2 Thess 2:15)
- μακροθυμέω (1 Cor 13:4; 1 Thess 5:14)
- μένω (Rom 9:11; 2 Cor 9:9; 1 Tim 2:15; 2 Tim 3:14)
- παραμένω (Phil 1:25)
- πάσχω (1 Cor 12:26; 2 Cor 1:6; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:12; cf. Gal 3:4)
- προπάσχω (1 Thess 2:2)
- προσκαρτερέω (Rom 12:12; Col 4:2)
- στέγω (1 Cor 9:12)
- στήκω (1 Cor 16:13; Gal 5:1; Phil 1:27; 4:1; 2 Thess 2:15)
- συγκακοπαθέω (2 Tim 1:8; 2:3)
- συμπάσχω (Rom 8:17; 1 Cor 12:26)
- ὑπομένω (Rom 12:12; 1 Cor 13:7; 2 Tim 2:10, 12)
- ὑποφέρω (1 Cor 10:13; 2 Tim 3:11)
- Φέρω (9:22).

He may also use other verbs which can communicate the concept of enduring, such as the following:

- ἀγρυπνέω (Eph 6:18)
- ἀντέχω (Titus 1:9)
- βεβαιόω (Col 2:7)
- γίνομαι ἐδραῖος (1 Cor 15:58)

- γρηγορέω (1 Thess 5:6)
- ζημιόω (Phil 3:8; cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 2 Cor 7:9)
- κολλάω (Rom 12:9)
- προσμένω (1 Tim 5:5)
- σκοπέω (Gal 6:1; Phil 3:17)
- στηρίζω (2 Thess 2:17; 3:3)
- στοιχέω (Gal 5:25)
- τελέω (Rom 2:27; cf. παραβάτης found in Rom 2:27)
- τηρέω (1 Tim 5:22)
- φυλάσσω (Rom 2:26; 1 Tim 5:21; cf. Gal 6:13).