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Enduring to the end

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*Sermon preached by MR H. DAWSON at Bethel Chapel, Rye, on
Tuesday evening, 23rd April, 1957*

TEXT: Mark xiii. 13

**"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall
be saved"**

The subject is one which will lead to searching of heart among all who have the mercy to be born again. As one journeys on through life, this question becomes one of increasing importance in nearing the end of life's journey, "He that shall *endure* unto the *end*, the same shall be *saved*"; and good it is if it leads to an exercise unto godliness. The Psalmist's petition is very apposite: "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

"Lord, hast Thou made me know Thy ways?
Conduct me in Thy fear,
And grant me such supplies of grace,
That I may persevere."

I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at this subject from two or three viewpoints. The setting of the subject is exceedingly solemn and also suggestive. The dear Saviour at this time was addressing His Own disciples; and I have wondered if the disciples pondered this word in that which came into their lives soon afterwards. The word of God tells us concerning these same disciples, who were being addressed by the dear Saviour at this time, "And they all forsook Him, and fled". It tells us in one place, "Every man went to his own home". These same disciples were brought very, very low in their souls concerning Jesus Christ when He was apprehended, and when He was hung on Calvary's cross. They had many searchings of heart, many sad reflections, many solemn thoughts, and they did not show up well as disciples then; yet none of us can think of these disciples behaving as they did, and cast a stone at either one. Remember that I

Regarding the setting of the subject: "But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved"; it is to do with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, when the judgment of God was coming down in a terrible fulness upon the Jews as a nation; when they began to reap that word which they uttered: "His blood be on us, and on our children". Not only is that destruction referred to, but also it speaks of that time which is still ahead of us when Jesus Christ will come again, when time will cease to be, when all the Church of Christ will be gathered before God the Father, and that great word will be spoken by Him who is the Head of the Church: "Behold I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me".

Such is the setting of the subject; but the great question is this—this word is apposite for *you* and *me* to ponder as grace is given. These are the last days and perilous times in which you and I are living. The world is overrun with wickedness as never before in its long, sinful history. Whichever way you look, you can only discern chaos and confusion, warring and jarring amongst men, and in the midst of it all is the church of Christ. If you and I have the mercy to belong to it, we are expected to be witnesses for God and godliness, and to those of us who have names on church rolls, this is a very solemn word for *us* to contemplate, because it is to be feared that not all who have had their names on church rolls *have* endured unto the end. The word of God contains some very solemn instances where those who seemed to be setting out aright, proved in the end *not* to be what they professed to be at the first. There is a word I have looked at many times: "And I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone to the place of the holy". Where you are in this "Bethel" is "the place of the holy", and it is a very solemn consideration for those of us who try to preach the gospel, that the wicked can sit under it and listen to it, and go down into eternal misery with the sound of the gospel trumpet still ringing in their ears. Now that is a solemn thing to lay to heart.

"A solemn thing a saint to appear,
Grow up with wheat, and be a tare."

It is not enough, dear friends, to be just a chapel-goer; you may be a chapel-goer all your life long, and at the end be lost. Remember that!

This question of enduring unto the end hinges upon you, and the preacher too, having a right start in things divine. And what is a right start in things divine? If you started yourself, in whatever you profess to be, then you did not have a right start. No; a right start is when the Holy Spirit deals with a sinner, and begins His good work in that sinner's breast; and if the Holy Spirit does begin such a work therein, there is no question but what He will carry it on and complete it; and you will be concerned, if you are such a character, that that good work should be carried on in you. I say, you will be con-

cerned to obtain grace to help in every time of need, and that you may wear well in your profession of Jesus' Name, live well, die well. It will be an everyday exercise of mind that you shall endure *unto the end*, and that, when the end of life's journey shall come, you may have the mercy to find the bottom good in Jordan's swelling.

When the good work is begun in a sinner's heart, the sinner does not realize at first what he will be called to endure as he journeys on through life, and as he seeks to reduce to practice what he knows of the things of God. Often times when the good work is begun, the sinner is favoured to rejoice in hope of life eternal, and he looks forward with that hope, and he little realizes, I say, what lies ahead of him to endure; but he is called to endure unto the end that which God ordains shall come into his life, and God will guarantee him that grace to stand every test that He may put upon him in his profession of Jesus' Name. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."

The viewpoint I want to take of this subject as the Lord shall help me is, first of all, what sinners taught of God are called to endure. Sinners taught of God, I say. Those who have only a name to live, and are dead, are not called to endure the selfsame things. No. A sinner taught of God is called to endure, first of all, an increasing conviction of sin, an opening up of his sinnership. That the soul be without such knowledge is not good. No. "Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart." There is that great word, "When He, the Spirit of truth shall come, He shall convince the world of sin." That is one aspect of the truth that all who are taught of God are called to endure as they journey on through life; and that sometimes means that every day you feel to be a bigger sinner than you did the day before, a greater failure, and to come yet even more short in all that you would be and would do. But while you feel that experience within you, and have to sigh and groan before God that what you are by nature may not bubble up and bubble over and undo you in your profession of Jesus' Name, you do not live like a sinner before the world at large. No, your life without is consistent, upright, and what it should be; but it is that which you have to endure because you realize what you are by nature is the leprosy that "lies deep within". And God has ordained that this experience must be known and felt. The dear Saviour said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick"; and

"The heart once hard as steel,
Now made for sin to feel,
Bears tokens of a ransomed soul."

Go back over life's journey, some of you who have long been following on to know the Lord, you have had to learn, especially lately it may be, what that word in Ezekiel means, "Turn again, son of man, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these". And that is

because God has ordained you must take root downward and then bear fruit upward. Remember,

"Sinner, if thou art taught to see
How great thy guilt and misery,
In every thought and act impure,
The blood of Christ thy soul can cure."

As you are being helped to endure what I have said—an opening up of your sinnership, your state as you were born, the plague of the heart known and felt—you will find that the word of God will be a wondrous help to you in describing before God what you feel. You will adopt scripture language in confession, when you try to tell all the truth as to what you are the subject of as a sinner. You will be saying with Isaiah, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sore". You will say, as Job did, "Behold, I am vile". Aye, and you will use those words of the apostle Paul's, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of *this death*?" So there is this to endure, an increasing conviction of sin, as you journey on through life and maintain your profession of Jesus' Name.

"Daily to feel thyself undone
Will make thee haste to kiss the Son,
And on thy knees for pardon sue,
And praise and bless and love Him, too."

Then the apostle Paul speaks about enduring a "great fight of afflictions". If you have the mercy to be born again, then you will find "the world opposes from without and unbelief within"; and that is a line of things you have got to endure, as grace is given, as long as you live; and this word says here: "And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake". The dear Saviour said to His disciples, "Marvel not if the world hate you; but know this, it hated Me before it hated you". "But they that endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Sometimes in your profession of Jesus' Name there will be an enduring of the hidings of the Father's face, solemn soul-desertion, and to come into that line of things referred to by Isaiah: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God". When you have known the sweetness and the wondrous happiness of living near to God; when you have been able to rejoice that matters are right between God and you, and you have walked in the light of Him who is the Light of the world, *then* to come into darkness and not into light, oh, it is very painful experience for poor sinners to endure! God has so ordained that this is the way that oftentimes heaven-bound pilgrims have to go along; and when you are in such a plight

in your soul's experience, how do you feel? You have to lament, "O that I knew where I might find Him"; and, like Job again, "I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand where He doth work . . . on the right hand"—but you cannot feel as you want to feel; and your evidences wherein you have been able to be of good courage all seem to be obscured for the time being, and you say, as the church did in the psalms, "We see not our signs".

"Zeal extinguished to a spark;
Life is very, very low;
All my evidences dark,
And good works I've none to show."

"But he that endureth unto the *end*."

In such a darksome experience you will be helped to endure; and the evidence of it will be this: you will be saying with the psalmist, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles"; and, like the psalmist again, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar". And remember, there seems to be a necessity that people who are taught of God, disciples indeed, should know somewhat of this darksome experience and be called to endure it.

"The flowers need night's cold darkness,
The midnight and the dew;
So Christ, from one who loved Him,
His shining oft withdrew."

It is a very crucial test for your religion to be put to when you do "walk in darkness and have no light", as you come then into a kind of winter-time experience. But in Nature's realm the root of the matter still functions in winter-time; the trees look stripped and bare, and they are, but they are not dead. The root of the matter still functions; and when spring-time comes, then the sap rises and there is evidence speedily of life in the buds and the opening leaves and blossoms, and later on in fruit-bearing. So it is with people who are disciples indeed in that which they are called to endure when they "walk in darkness and have no light".

"Though bleak winds the boughs deface,
The rooted stock shall still remain.
Leaves may languish, fruit decrease,
But more will grow again."

"But he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Then there will be temptations. "He that shall endure" temptations. And be sure of this, if the devil leaves your religion alone, then

you have solemn evidence therein that your religion is not that which *God* has wrought in you. The devil is said to be "the accuser of the brethren"; and he is; and these people referred to here, disciples indeed, are oftentimes in heaviness through manifold temptations.

"What though Satan's strong temptations
Vex and tease thee day by day,
And thy sinful inclinations
Often fill thee with dismay?
Thou shalt conquer,
Through the Lamb's redeeming blood."

Oh, but sometimes it is very heavy work for poor sinners, when they come into Satan's sieve and they are riddled, as it were, therein, and all that they have professed is called into question, and Satan threatens to undermine their religion and to rob them of the happiness and peace they have felt in the profession of it. It is a solemn business then to endure unto the end. Yet,

"The Lord will make the tempter flee,
And as thy days thy strength shall be."

Then the apostle Paul spoke to Timothy about enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Much might be said about that word, *hardness*. I do not know if you think of these things, dear friends, but I should be prepared to say that one of the things to be deplored nowadays amongst us in our denominational life is *softness*. (I am not fitting caps on.) This word tells us, "Endure hardness". What does that mean? Analyse your own life, and that will help you to arrive at the meaning as far as it concerns you. What hardness is there in your life. I only want to help you to find out. Think of this line of things, as we read it, and remember this is how people taught of God, disciples long years ago, had to live their lives, and by faith God enabled them to endure unto the end: "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11. 36-38). There you get a picture of what old-time disciples were called to endure. And now compare your life with that picture of what those disciples were called to endure, and see whereabouts your enduring hardness comes in. Nowadays England is said to be a "welfare state", and in some senses it is; and that means that often people have much more *ease* to do with than our fathers and forefathers had, so that many people with names on church rolls have more comfort under their home roofs thereby. Where, then, does hardness come in? And there must be an enduring of hardness. It is to do with fighting the good

fight of faith; it is as you are not ashamed of Jesus, as you go out into the world in which you live and move; it is for you to "let your yea be yea and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation". It is for you to have grace enough to do this (and remember, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful") but I sometimes have thought that if only one word recorded in the word of God were attended to it would put everything right in our denominational life, and all our Causes would be put in order before God and man; and that word is this, "These are the things which ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour" (Zech. viii. 16-17). And now, to do that means enduring hardness "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ".

"He that shall endure unto the *end*." You must expect often in your profession of Jesus' Name to endure setbacks, disappointments, and then there is our everyday life to live, and that means you have to live it in that sphere God has ordained for you to be in. Sometimes everyday life (I draw a bow at a venture) everyday life may seem to you to have much in it that is monotonous, and that which is repetition; and you do today what you did yesterday, and tomorrow you will still be doing what you have been doing today; and sometimes that seems to you to be irksome, and you realize your need of grace to endure, that you may continue in the way that God has set you going, it may be years ago. In enduring in everyday life, whatever your sphere may be therein, remember this,

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily to our God."

"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be *saved*."

Then there is, alas, the prospect that all of us who desire to be "disciples indeed" may have to endure much more as the future unfolds in these tremendous times in which you and I are living. There is a word I have looked at sometimes; it has not yet been fulfilled, but there is no doubt but what it will be fulfilled, and very solemn it is to think of it. It says in the days ahead of us, when Antichrist will be more manifest than even he is nowadays, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear" (Rev. 13 : 8). Regarding the saints it says this, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations" (Rev. 13 : 7). That is a very dark background for you and me to contemplate enduring unto the end as the future unfolds which will bring

to pass that word without fail. And it says, blessed be God, also, "These shall make war with the *Lamb*, and the *Lamb* shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him [here you will understand what it is to endure], they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17: 14). "He that shall *endure* unto the end, the same shall be *saved*."

There is another viewpoint of this subject that I would like to touch on. I have shown you just a little summary, and some aspects of truth that all who are taught of God are called to endure as they walk out their profession of Jesus' Name. And now the next thought is, what is really needful that you and I may endure? You and I need most of all to be taught to pray. You will find the apostle Paul stresses it like this; "Pray without ceasing". It does not mean that you are on your knees all day long, but it means you must never give up trying to pray although you sometimes feel, "I would, but cannot pray". Then the apostle Paul says, "Praying always, continuing instant in prayer"; and that is what you and I need grace to do. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications." The remedy lies before thee, in all that you are called to endure—pray! "Lord, teach us to pray."

"Ever on thy Captain calling,
Make thy worst condition known;
He shall hold thee up when falling,
Or shall lift thee up when down."

You will find in the word of God, and it might be helpful to contemplate it, much to encourage you regarding enduring. The Holy Spirit uses some very striking illustrations; and the word of God says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15 : 4). Sometimes you look within and you can hardly tell what you are and where you are in things divine, and you seek to look back along life's way to see the waymarks and high heaps you hope you have set up in bygone experiences; but you cannot see them because there seems to be a mist, a fog, settled down upon all your past experiences. Then that brings you to searching of heart as to enduring.

"Lord, decide the doubtful case,
Thou Who art Thy people's Sun,
Shine upon Thy work of grace,
If indeed it be begun."

You may read in the word of God that these disciples indeed sometimes in their soul's experience are like the "thirsty land" or the "parched ground"; and you remember that wonderful picture that Ezekiel saw in the vision of the dry bones. "Can these dry bones

live?" Sometimes you can hardly tell whether you are alive in things divine, because you have to set forth your experience like this:

"If aught I feel, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel."

Yet you are not dead, nor is your religion dried up altogether. You are, as I have said, like that parched ground. I can remember long years ago, in a time of great drought, looking at the fields by my home, and seeing dust blow across where there should be green grass, pasture for the beasts of the field; and I wondered if the grass after all was dead; but there came some showers, and I remember going into the fields and looking to see what was happening, and where the tufts of grass looked just like coconut matting there were green shoots pushing up to show that the root of the matter was still functioning, and it was not long afterwards that the fields were green again. So it is sometimes with these disciples *indeed* in enduring unto the end. You may feel in such a dead, dried-up state that you wonder if you have any religion at all that God has wrought in you, and look within and feel, "Can ever God dwell here?" Then when you get a little power from on high, softening your heart, what happens? When you find the spirit of prayer granted—bubbling up, and you can say, "It is good for me to draw near to God", oh, then you find life is restored to what seemed to be dead before; and *that* is enduring! The root of the matter underneath remains a reality, but you do want most of all to be fruitful in things divine. "He that shall endure unto the *end*."

And now, if you go back over life's journey and try and search into things regarding your profession of Jesus' Name, your religion—I want say something as God shall help me that shall help you—here you are in the attitude of worship, and you have lived long, some of you; long, long years have you been following on to know the Lord. You can look back; you hope God began His work in you, and since then He has carried it on, but there are many days in your life wherein you could not say much about the dealings of God with you—you have nothing outstanding, you have no Ebenezer set up, no Hill Mizar raised, to show what was going on between God and you then; and yet from the time that the good work was begun it *has* been carried on, notwithstanding whatever your soul's experience has been. Sometimes it has been like this, "As dying, and behold we live"; "Ever sinking, yet to swim". Maybe this will sum it up:

"Our good Guide and Saviour has helped us thus far,
And 'tis by His favour we are what we are."

Remember in the "Pilgrim's Progress", there is that picture drawn by John Bunyan where he saw a man pouring water on a fire, and the fire still burned; and he could not understand the why and wherefore of it; but he was shown that there was another Man (and that

Man must be spelt with a capital M) another Man behind a wall pouring on oil; and so the fire continued, because the oil triumphed over the water, and that is how it is disciples indeed are enabled to endure unto the end. The word of God says, "They shall be holpen with a little help"; and may you and I be thankful for a little help! Here a little, there a little, help is obtained; sometimes you get a little help under the gospel, you realize the power of it, and it strengthens your faith and encourages you to go on. Sometimes you get help when you try to pray, and you get answers to prayer, and oh, how strengthening is an answer to prayer!

"That Christ is God I can avouch,
And for His people cares,
Since I have prayed to Him as such,
And He has heard my prayers."

Sometimes you are helped in singing the songs of Zion; you find the hymnwriter felt just like you do, and your experience is outlined for you, and, "as in water face answereth to face, so does the heart of man to man". And sometimes in the word of God you get help, and you can say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path". "Good is the word of the Lord." And oh, the help there is when you can obtain a promise—when you can say, "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope". Sometimes you get help and you are strengthened when God grants you a little meditation and this is to be prized—a sanctified mind, a spiritual mind, when you can do this:

"I muse on the years that are past,
Wherein my defence Thou hast proved;
Nor wilt Thou relinquish at last
A sinner so signally loved."

You get a glimpse then, an opening up of how you have been helped to endure along life's way in your profession of Jesus' Name. When you are in that frame of mind, and you can look back and take a retrospect of how God has helped you hitherto, you then, with faith in living exercise, can look forward to whatever the future holds in store, and you get this feeling wrought:

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given.
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

"But he that shall *endure* unto the end."

You will find in the word of God, too, not only those things I just touched on which the Holy Spirit has recorded to show whereabouts sinners may be in their soul's experience and yet taught of God; you find life is sometimes likened to a race: "So run, that ye may obtain".

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Now the great thing which is essential in running a race (and that is, such a race as this is) the great thing that is essential is to endure, "faint, yet pursuing"; to press on. Then sometimes a profession of Jesus' Name is likened to a fight, and that means enduring, because it means this, if you do not get a blow in on your behalf as grace is given, Satan will get in a blow at you; and there can be no flag of truce, no peace terms, no armistice. It must be like this, for the conflict is of such a nature that you have got to maintain it until you come down to the end of life's journey.

"The spirits of the just,
Confined in bodies, groan
Till death consigns the corpse to dust,
And then (and not till then), the conflict's done."

So it is made manifest that the life of the righteous is a struggle, a conflict, a race, a fight. Sometimes it is said to be a wrestling. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers." It is also likened to one being in a ship at sea: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep"; and having set out from the shore, and being out on the ocean, there are storms that rise to endure. You can read that lively description that the psalmist has portrayed for us in a wonderful word-picture where he speaks of what those who go to sea as disciples indeed are called to endure: "He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end"—margin reading, "all their wisdom is swallowed up". And now here arises the question of enduring it: "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven (Psalm 107 : 23-30). "But he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Think on the hymn-writer's word, for it sums up all I have been trying to set before you (I have already quoted it)—

"Ever on thy Captain calling,
Make thy worst condition known;
He shall hold thee up when falling,
Or shall lift thee up when down."

Thus you will have the mercy to endure to the end, and you will know what it is to be saved. *Amen.*