

# Spiritual Warfare

“Enduring Hardness as a Good Soldier of/like Jesus”

Learning to Endure

Part 3

## **PAUL:**

2 Cor. 1:8-9 Paul describes in detail the hardness he endured in Asia.

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead.”

**“Our trouble”** – *Thlipsis* = the kind of hardship Paul and his group were enduring = “a heavy pressure situation, a tight place, under a heavy burden and in a great squeeze.”

“We were under an unbelievably heavy amount of stress and pressure. We were beneath a heavy load and trapped in very tight circumstances! Our minds were being squeezed, and it felt like the life was being pushed right out of us.”

Some would think what Paul was going through was physical suffering, but when we understand the words he used, we discover it was a mental battle he was facing.

**“Pressed out of measure”**- means to throw something beyond, excessive or beyond the normal range that most experience.”

“We are under an abnormal amount of pressure. It was far beyond anything we had ever previously experienced. It was excessive, unbelievable, unbearable, and far too much for any one human being to endure.”

**“Above strength”** – something normal human strength would never have been sufficient for this situation. This predicament required strength on a measure that I had never previously needed. It was beyond me!”

v. 8 – **“We despaired even of life”** – “A situation with no way out. [word exasperated comes from this word]. Describes individuals who are caught, pinned down, trapped, against the wall, and utterly helpless.”

At the end of the road or rope!

v. 9 – **“We had the sentence of death in ourselves...”**

“The final verdict seemed to be given and we were not going to make it.”

“We thought so because this is what we were sensing already in our souls.”

All these descriptive meanings imply that the pressure and trial Paul and his team were suffering were of a mental nature, which of course would affect their physical wellbeing.

Another translation of this would be:

“We would not, have you ignorant of the horribly tight, life-threatening squeeze that came to us in Asia. It was unbelievable! With all the things we’ve been through, this was the worst of all – it felt like our lives were being crushed. It was so difficult that I didn’t know what to do. No experience I’ve ever been through required so much of me. In fact, I didn’t have enough strength to cope with it. Toward the end of this ordeal, I was so overwhelmed that I didn’t think we’d ever get out. I felt suffocated, trapped, and pinned against the wall. I really thought it was the end of the road for us! As far as we were concerned, the verdict was in, and the verdict said “death.” But really, this was no great shock, because we already were feeling the effect of death and depression in our souls...”

## What was causing this in Paul's life?

- His friends/team had forsaken him because they were afraid of persecution.
- He faced the very real possibility of death on a daily basis.

When Paul wrote, “We despaired even of life,” he was describing the most excruciating kind of mental pressure imaginable!”

Paul didn't break and he didn't die!

If you and I can remain committed to fighting right where we stand, neither will we be defeated.

We will be able to come through every experience with the assurance that we don't trust in ourselves but in the power of the Lord which raises the dead.

2 Cor. 1:9, 10

“Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver...”

What the Lord asks of us is that we remain at our post, position and refuse to give in to pressure, refuse to let the devil win, and enforce the victory Jesus has already won for us.

If we remain faithful to God, He will be faithful to us.

## JOHN:

Many years after the Roman Emperor Nero died; Domitian came to power in Rome.

His persecution of the church was even more severe than Nero's.

By the time of his reign, all the Apostles had been martyred except for John.

He had John arrested and to stand trial for his faith.

Tradition relates after John refused to deny Jesus as Lord, he had him dipped into a vat of boiling oil.

God's hand of protection kept John from this tortuous death as He had kept the three Hebrew young men from the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.

Infuriated, Domitian had John banished to the Island of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. A place the Romans sent prisoners to serve time and die: murderers, robbers and criminals.

- Very difficult terrain, no resources: water, food, and very bad weather.

John's only crime is that he faithfully served the Lord for many decades.

John said this about himself in Rev. 1:9

**“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”**

“I am your brother” - “Brother” =

- Yes, he was a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus Christ with others.
- He was conveying a specific message to other believers who were suffering like he was.
- I am a brother with you in a spiritual respect, but also a brother in affliction, in persecution, in problems, in struggles and in trials. You and I are the very same – we are brothers.

## Why is his identification as a brother with others so important?

- John was one of the original twelve disciples/Apostle chosen directly by Jesus Christ.
- His status and renown was very well known and respected among the church.
- Many people then and even today have the perception that great spiritual leaders have such a refined faith that they avoid the hardships of life.
  - A very false perception!
- John found himself on the Isle of Patmos suffering as a criminal – not seeking empathy – he wanted to encourage the other saints.
  - They were not alone in their predicaments.

John could have legitimately introduced himself as  
“John, the great, illustrious, powerful, anointed, special,  
well-known apostle of Jesus Christ...”  
in all honesty, but he didn't.

## Why didn't he say those things?

- When you find yourself in the heat of the battle fending off satanic attacks, popularity and celebrity status cease to matter.
- Affluence, prestige, power, and notoriety all lost their importance when you're living in a warfare.
- When John wrote those words, it didn't matter that he was John, the beloved disciple of Jesus.
- All people, whether known or unknown, feel the same pain, hurt, and confusion and they all experience the same struggles of life.

**John stated the ways in which he was experiencing brotherhood and unity with the other believers undergoing struggles.**

- “Companion” speaks of a common experience, something that everyone experiences, or something shared.
- Two or more persons who are joined in partnership and are sharing the same experience together.
- John was removing the “awe” from who he was by saying, “I am your brother. You and I are partners together in this ordeal. What you’re experiencing, I’m experiencing too. We’re sharing a common experience and in this together.”

John continued to identify himself by saying:

“I who also am your brother and companion in tribulation.”

- This was comforting for the believers then and should be for us now.
- All the believers share in the same testimony.
- We are all forced to carry excessive burdens that have the potential to crush us.
- “I understand what you’re going through, I am your brother and fellow companion in these crushing difficulties.”

**John was a leader in the church; people looked to him as a leader.**

If he could endure the persecution at his age,  
there is no excuse for the rest of us.

If he could remain true to Jesus and his testimony of faith  
in all he went through – so can we.

## **John’s mentioning of the Kingdom- Rev. 1:9 “in the Kingdom”**

- John never forgot his identity as a Kingdom citizen, not a world-famous Apostle.
- The world viewed him as a political rebel, a criminal – John kept his focus that he was first a member of the Kingdom of God.
- It was for The Kingdom and his Lord that he was suffering this persecution.
- It wasn’t really against him; it was the battle between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of Light.
- The real issue wasn’t John – the real issue was The Kingdom.

We must keep this in the forefront of our thinking also.

Just as they did, we too must become and be willing to pay any price to see The Kingdom advanced.

John was pleased to be a political prisoner on behalf of his King.

## John's mentioning of Patience of Jesus Christ..." Rev. 1:9

- Patience = carries the meaning of being under something very heavy.

“It is a decision to abide in one spot and not move away from it even when the load gets excessively heavy.”

- It is “staying in there or hang in there power.”

Patience was believed to be the queen of all virtues in the Early Church among believers.

- The decision to endure any trial and last longer than any adversary.
- When you have patience, you will always win.

John was saying:

**“Just like the rest of my brothers and sisters, I am under an unbelievably heavy load – a load so heavy it should crush me – but I have decided not to move! I know the Gospel is true. I know what Jesus Christ has done in my own life. I am NOT going to move off my stance of faith in Him.”**

In the end,

John’s patience caused him to outlive his persecutor – Domitian.

Whatever you may be going through in your life now, this principle applies to you as well.

You may be tempted to think:

- How did this happen to me?
- What did I do wrong?
- Why did God allow this to take place?
- How did satan get in and do this to me?

Your questions will not change your situation.

What is important and imperative is that you deal with the enemies attack bravely, endure hardness if you must, and come out a winner.

Don't give an inch, stay in the place God has placed you – refuse to be moved, even when the load becomes more than you can bear.

Patience and endurance will put you over and put satan under –  
**satan has no counterattack for patience!**

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