

# Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ

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**Table of Contents**

Pressing Forward..... 4

Steadfastness in Christ..... 6

Find Rest unto your Soul..... 7

Stand Fast..... 9

Conclusion..... 10

# Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Jesus Christ

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*And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save; Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.*

*2 Nephi 13:27-30*

After Jesus Christ called the twelve disciples in Matthew, chapter ten, He charged them to go forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, saying, “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand...And ye shall be hated of all the world for my name’s sake; but he that *endureth to the end* shall be saved.<sup>1</sup>” Jesus told the disciples, that as they served God and stood as witnesses of Christ at all times and in all places, that they would experience trials, afflictions, and persecutions, and exhorted them to endure to the end. Unsurprisingly, the commandment to endure has been given numerous times throughout the Scriptures. However, what does it mean to endure to the end?

The 1828 Webster’s Dictionary defines the word endure as “to last; to continue in the same state without perishing; to remain; to abide. To bear; to brook; to suffer without resistance, or without yielding.” The foremost Scriptural definition of enduring to the end can be found in the life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who continued and remained in a perfect state of innocence and who also suffered without complaint. “For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should *follow his steps*; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.<sup>2</sup>” Please read the following Scripture passages from Isaiah 53:7, Matthew 26:51-52, and Matthew 27:11-15:

**53:7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, **yet he opened not his mouth**; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, **so he openeth not his mouth.**

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10:6 and 19

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 2:21-24

**26:51** Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? **26:52** **But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled**, that thus it must be?

**27:11** And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? **27:12** And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest truly; for thus it is written of me. **27:13** And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, ***he answered nothing.*** **27:14** Then saith Pilate unto him, Harest thou not how many things they witness against thee? **27:15** And he answered him not to his questions; yea, ***never a word***, insomuch that the governor **marveled greatly.**

The above Scriptures are only a few of many that bear witness that Jesus Christ suffered afflictions without resistance and without complaint. In Hebrews, we read, “Who for the joy that was set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.<sup>3</sup>” Throughout His life and ministry, Jesus first and foremost did the will of His Father. “Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work.<sup>4</sup>” We would ask the reader, what does it mean to endure to the end? It means for us to be exclusively God’s by becoming His sons and daughters, to take up the cross, and to follow after Jesus Christ, not simply for a day or two, but for our whole life.

It is important to understand that the word endure, as defined by Christ, is an action verb. When Jesus was accused by the chief priests and elders, we read that “he answered nothing.” However, not responding and doing nothing at all are two completely different concepts. In fact, by Christ’s *action* to remain silent, He provided a strong witness of His desire to do God’s will.

For an example, in order to endure extreme cold, the last thing an individual would want to do is to do nothing. Instead, the individual needs to remain in a constant state of movement or activity in order to keep their body temperature from dropping. The same example must be applied in our spiritual life. As Jesus told His parents after they searched for Him, “Why is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?<sup>5</sup>” In order for us to endure to the end, we must be about our Heavenly Father’s business, which is building the Kingdom of God and establishing the cause of Zion. [For more on the Kingdom, read **Chapter Eight**]. The following Scripture passages are from the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 23:4a-b and Section 58:1b:

**23:4a** For thou shalt **devote all thy service in Zion.** And in this thou shalt have strength. **23:4b** Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; **but endure them**, for lo, I am with you, even unto the end of thy days.

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 12:2

<sup>4</sup> John 4:36

<sup>5</sup> Luke 2:49

**58:1b** for verily I say unto you, Blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same ***is greater*** in the kingdom of heaven.

## Pressing Forward

As Jesus Christ explained to the disciples, we will experience trials and afflictions while in this life. Thankfully however, we do not walk the path alone. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another *Comforter*, that he may abide with you *forever*; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him for he *dwelleth in you*, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.<sup>6</sup>”

As we enter into the Kingdom of God through the baptism of the water and the Spirit, we are given the gift of the Holy Ghost to dwell within us, and the Holy Ghost testifies of God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son. God has promised that if we keep His commandments, we will always have His Spirit to be with us, which will guide and direct us. Thus, we are never alone. [For further study on the Holy Ghost, read **Chapters Three and Sixteen**]

Nonetheless, after we enter into the Kingdom, are we done? If we were done, if all we needed in order to be with God was to be baptized and to receive the Holy Ghost, why then did Jesus Christ command the disciples to endure to the end? If we were finished after entering into the strait and narrow gate and we did nothing more, would that not lead to becoming spiritually frozen? Please read the following from 2 Nephi 13:27-30:

**13:27** And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? **13:28** Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save; **13:29** Wherefore, ye must ***press forward*** with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. **13:30** Wherefore, if ye shall ***press forward***, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: ***Ye shall have eternal life.***

Similar to how Jesus pressed forward into His ministry after His baptism, the sons and daughters of God are called to do the same. Those individuals that have entered into the covenant of baptism and have received the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands have done so because of their faith in the Son of God. However, entering into the covenant is the easy part, enduring to the end is the portion where we struggle the most, not because the commandments of God are grievous [read 1 John 5:3], but because we are not pressing forward “with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.” Please read the following testimony:

*When I started coming back to the church, I was filled with a passion to read through the Scriptures from start to finish. Although I had been born into the church, I had never read the Scriptures before. At first, it was easy. I enjoyed reading the Scriptures so much, especially the*

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<sup>6</sup> John 14:16-18

*Book of Mormon, that it wasn't difficult to continue to read every day. However, after a while, it became a struggle because as I read I felt the Holy Ghost very strongly, which was not something that I was used too. The best way I can describe it is like looking at the bright sun after you have spent all day inside. It's enjoyable, but it also hurts the eyes because you are not accustomed to the brightness. This is how I felt with the Scriptures.*

*Once the initial passion began to fade somewhat, it was difficult to read the Scriptures for any length of time. I still kept on reading, but I could only read so far before I felt like I had to stop and take a break. Eventually, I got to the point where I desired to spend more time in the Scriptures. I felt that it wasn't right that I could only read small portions at a time, so I was kind of stuck at a road block. I wanted to read more than I had been, but I also felt at the same time that I could only read so much before I just couldn't take in the light any further.*

*I had a decision to make. I could either keep doing what I was doing, which was having a good desire but not acting upon it, I could take a break from reading altogether and come back later, or I could press forward. Of course, it is important to understand that the middle option was not of the Spirit of God, but that same evil spirit that teaches a man not to pray [read 2 Nephi 14:11-12]. We will never grow closer to God by taking a break from a commandment, such as reading the words of Christ.*

*It took a while, but ultimately I ended up going with the third option, which helped me to grow in knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you think about it in another way, it was very similar to exercising. When you work out for a long time and never change your routine, your body gets accustomed to it and it becomes difficult to get any stronger. Instead, if you want to get stronger, you need to add more weight and more repetitions. However, if you only desire to get stronger, but never add the extra weight, you will never improve. Nevertheless, if you do add in the extra weight and repetitions, your body will continue to grow stronger.*

The Holy Scriptures, consisting of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, are crucial in our walk with the Lord, as Nephi wrote, "If ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life." It is imperative for the reader to understand that when we truly feast on the words of Christ, we are taking it inside of us so that the word can become alive in our heart. The Webster's Dictionary defines feasting as "eating luxuriously; faring sumptuously; delighting; gratifying." Without the word of God, it would be very difficult to press forward with a steadfastness in Jesus Christ, "For behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."<sup>7</sup>

In Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life, he saw multitudes of people traveling down different paths. One multitude desired to travel to the great and spacious building, which represented the pride of the world, while others desired to partake of the Tree of Life, which represented the pure love of God and eternal

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Nephi 14:4

life. However, “There arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.”<sup>8</sup>

The mists of darkness were “the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they may perish, and are lost.”<sup>9</sup> The only way that the people were able to stay true to the path which lead to the Tree of Life, was for them to hold fast to the rod of iron, which was a representation of the word of God. Please read the following from 1 Nephi 2:68-69 and 78:

**2:68** And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; **2:69** And they did **press forward through the mist of darkness, *clinging to the rod of iron***, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree...**2:78** But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, ***continually holding fast to the rod of iron***, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.

In order to endure to the end, or in other words to remain a son or daughter of God till the end, we also need to hold fast to the word of God, which testifies of the truth of Jesus Christ and gives us the example on how to live. As mentioned previously, if we truly feast upon the word of God, it will become alive inside of us and will light our path. In Psalms, we read, “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word...How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”<sup>10</sup>

In order for us to have our agency, we will experience opposition in this life, which means that we *will* face trials and temptations. However, God has provided us with the instruments that we need in order to stay on the strait and narrow path, such as the Holy Scriptures. “And thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels, sent forth from the presence of God; and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>11</sup>

## Steadfastness in Christ

Nephi wrote, “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.” However, what does it mean to press forward with steadfastness? The 1828 Webster’s Dictionary defines the word steadfast as “firmly fixed or established; constant; firm; resolute; not fickle or wavering,” while the word steadfastness is defined as “firmness of mind or purpose; fixedness in principle.” Therefore, it is important to ask ourselves, is our faith and hope in Jesus Christ firmly fixed or unwavering? If not, then why not?

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Nephi 2:67

<sup>9</sup> 1 Nephi 3:125

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 119:101, 103-105

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 5:44

Shortly after Moses and all of Israel departed from the land of Egypt, the Pharaoh hardened his heart and gathered his choice chariots and captains to pursue after them. When the people of Israel saw the Egyptian army approaching, they were filled with fear and they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding the great and many testimonies that the people had seen in Egypt [i.e. the ten plagues], when Israel was met with a trial, they immediately lost their hope and faith in God. Brothers and sisters are we any different, or do we remain steadfast as Moses? Please read Moses response from Exodus 14:13-16:

**14:13** And Moses said unto the people, ***Fear ye not, stand still***, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. **14:14** ***The Lord shall fight for you***, and ye shall hold your peace. **14:15** And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, ***that they go forward***; **14:16** But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

Of course, it is important to note that Israel was facing a very large and imminent trial in the Scripture above. Nonetheless, this does not mean that God will not deliver us from smaller trials that we face every day if we press forward with steadfastness in Christ. When Nephi was mocked and attacked by his brothers for desiring to build a ship as the Lord had commanded him, he said, "If God had commanded men to do all things, I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, Be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done. And now, if the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he can not instruct me that I should build a ship?"<sup>13</sup> If God has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that He cannot deliver us from our trials, temptations, and afflictions no matter how small they may seem?

## Find Rest unto your Soul

Unfortunately, there are times in our walk with the Lord when "the spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak,"<sup>14</sup> and there are also times when we view the work of God as a burden. However, as we mentioned previously, "His [God] commandments are not grievous."<sup>15</sup> Jesus told the multitudes, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Exodus 14:11-12

<sup>13</sup> 1 Nephi 5:157-159

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 26:38

<sup>15</sup> 1 John 5:3

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 11:29-30



Generally, when the word easy is applied to a command, we think of it being not hard or difficult. Nevertheless, easy actually means “quiet; being at rest; free from pain, disturbance or annoyance; free from anxiety, care; tranquil; as an easy mind.” Thus, if our hope is in the atonement of Jesus Christ and we take His yoke upon us, then we will be filled with the peace of God that passes all understanding and we will find rest to our souls, even while laboring for God with all our might. Alma wrote to his son Helaman, “Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ: teach them to humble themselves, and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; Teach them to *never be weary* of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart: for such shall find *rest to their souls*.<sup>17</sup>” Finding rest unto our souls does not mean that we will do nothing, but that we will never be weary of good works. Please read the following from 1 Corinthians 15:58 and 1 Nephi 3:187-189:

**15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

**3:187** And *blessed* are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; **3:188** And if they **endure unto the end**, they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; **3:189** And whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.

The Scriptures are full of examples of individuals who gave all that they had for the Lord and received rest unto their souls, such as Enos. When individuals like Joseph Smith, Jr., Stephen, and Abinadi were faced with great trials, they pressed forward with steadfastness in Jesus Christ and a perfect brightness of hope. As latter day saints of the Church of Jesus Christ, we should strive to emulate their example. Please read the following from Acts 7:54-60 and Mosiah 9:10-15, 26-27:

**7:54** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him [Stephen] with their teeth. **7:55** But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, *looked up steadfastly* into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. **7:56** And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

**7:57** Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, **7:58** And cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. **7:59** And they stoned Stephen; and he, calling upon God, said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. **7:60** And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

**9:10** And he [King Noah] said unto him, Abinadi, we have found an accusation against thee, and thou art worthy of death. **9:11** For thou hast said that God himself should come down among the children of men; **9:12** And now for this cause thou shalt be put to death, unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou hast spoken evil concerning me and my people.

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<sup>17</sup> Alma 17:66-67

**9:13** Now Abinadi said unto him: I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true; **9:14** And that ye may know of their surety, I have ***suffered myself*** that I have fallen into your hands. **9:15** Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you.

**9:26** O God, receive my soul. **9:27** And now when Abinadi had said these words, he fell, having suffered death by fire; yea, having been put to death because he would not deny the commandments of God: having sealed the truth of his words by his death.

## Stand Fast

Peter wrote a word of strong counsel in his first epistle, saying, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him; for he *careth for you*. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.<sup>18</sup>”

By the grace, mercy, and love of God, we have access to Him through the Only Begotten Son. However, the adversary will do all that he can to attempt to separate us from the pure love of Christ, and sadly, the world is filled with that mist of darkness. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth...for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.<sup>19</sup>” Nonetheless, there is no reason to be afraid if our foundation is built upon the Rock of Jesus Christ, because “when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds; yea, his shafts in the whirlwind; yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you, to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build, they can not fall.<sup>20</sup>” Please read the following Scriptures from 1 John 4:4 and 1 John 5:4-5:

**4:4** Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because ***greater is he*** that is in you, than he that is in the world.

**5:4** For whatsoever is born of God ***overcometh*** the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. **5:5** Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that ***believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?***

In order to overcome the world, we must believe in Jesus Christ and be born of God, which requires us to stand fast in the faith, or in other words, to be “steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God.<sup>21</sup>” If we are steadfast in our faith, then we will always abound in good works and our life will be a living testimony of Jesus Christ. Again, it is important to remember that enduring

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<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter 5:6-8, 10

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 12:12

<sup>20</sup> Helaman 2:74-75

<sup>21</sup> Alma 1:36

to the end and standing fast, does not mean that we are to do nothing, but as Paul wrote to the Romans, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”<sup>22</sup>”

## Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, we have been graced with the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Gospel, and the everlasting covenant, and to “whom much is given much is required.”<sup>23</sup> Although all of us have at one time been in bondage to sin, Paul exhorted the saints to “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”<sup>24</sup> Assuredly as the sons and daughters of God, we will face trials and tribulations of every kind, but if we look to our Rock and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, we will truly be able to stand in holy places.

Alma testified to his son, Helaman, “I have been supported under trials and troubles of every kind, yea, and in all manner of afflictions; yea, God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me.”<sup>25</sup> Wherefore, let us feast upon the words of our Savior and endure to the end. “Stand fast in the work wherewith I have called you, and a hair on your head shall not be lost, and you shall be lifted up at the last day. Amen.

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 12:21

<sup>23</sup> DC 81:1c

<sup>24</sup> Galatians 5:1

<sup>25</sup> Alma 17