

Exercise Endurance

- ✚ pain for gain (v.24)
- ✚ in step with the Spirit (v.25)
- ✚ can the conceit (v.26)

In the name of our Savior God, dearly beloved citizens of heaven, champions of the Last Judgment:

News flash: You already won the election. Earthly elections come and go, but the only election that counts in the end is the election that happened before the beginning. ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*** (Genesis 1:1) But before that in eternity God voted for you by name to be His own. He mapped out your life to come to faith by Word and water, then to **Exercise Endurance** into an eternity of bliss with God in heaven. How do I know? The Lord’s Apostle Paul says: ***“Dear brothers, loved by God, we know that God has chosen you, because our gospel did not come to you with mere words, but with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction....”*** The dear Holy Spirit is proving your election by the way you listen to the Gospel and imitate our Lord Jesus. You rejoice in affliction as ***“you patiently wait for [God’s] Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, the one who is going to rescue us from the coming wrath.”*** (1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 EHV¹) Preparing for Sunday School and Bible Class, worship and Holy Communion, you are anticipating J-Day – “Jesus’ Day / Judgment Day” – to greet your Savior with joy. He chose us not because of anything we do or whatever we are, but purely by grace. **Grace-given** means **Grace-driven** to **Exercise Endurance** expecting...

✚ pain for gain (v.24)

What has really changed since Adam and Eve rebelled against God (Genesis 3)? The nations still rage against God’s Son, Savior and Judge. Still ***“the wicked person plots against the righteous. He gnashes his teeth at him, but the Lord laughs at the wicked, because he sees that his day is coming.”*** (Psalm 37:12f) So for now **Endurance** hurts. ***“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful flesh with its passions and desires.”*** Yet, “if you know this, then the suffering is easier and more bearable for you. You can comfort yourself by saying, ‘Well now, if I want to be a Christian, I must wear the colors of the team. Our dear Christ doesn't give out any other clothing for his side. I must endure this suffering.’”²

There is a limit to all the *sufferings* that Christ will go through with His people as we share the Gospel in an anti-Christian world. That Day known only to God will come when all the *suffering* has filled up the cup of **pain** which Christ gave to His first followers and from which we still must drink in this vale of tears. Paul could see with the eyes of faith that Christ’s cup of suffering was nearly full, and even more in our day. God’s patience with fallen sinners will finally say, “Enough!” Right now God’s enemies ***in the four corners of the earth...gather for battle*** against God. John saw in Revelation: ***“They came up over the broad expanse of the earth, and they surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.”*** (Revelation 20:9 EHV) So quick, so simple, so sudden – and it will all be over. The last trumpet will sound and *suffering* will end forever for all souls who received redemption as a gift by faith in Christ. But God’s vengeance will pour out on all who rejected God’s gift of righteous satisfaction in Christ.

¹ EHV ~ Evangelical Heritage Version (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

² By Faith Alone, Martin Luther devotion on Colossians 1:24; May 11. © PocketBible www.laridian.com.

Part of our **pain** comes from the fact that our *sinful flesh* can never be satisfied. The heat of its intense longing fires ***“a continual lust for more.”*** (Ephesians 4:19 NIV84) Only in Christ can one have true satisfaction and contentment. “The sinful nature is addicted to its own interests and glory. [It] does not go away when we give in to it, even if only a little. It only grows in power and intensity. It must be destroyed by daily repentance. This repentance can only happen by the power of the Holy Spirit...[first with] the law to crush, then the gospel to empower and heal. Without this power, there is no change, and we perpetually pursue what satisfies our ego. We look for credit, merit, acclaim, acceptance by others, value, and human glory...[Moving] away from the gospel [is] a seductive illusion...the frog-in-the-kettle syndrome. As the heat is slowly turned up, the frog becomes more and more comfortable with warmer and warmer water until it loses its strength. Eventually, it is too late for the frog to jump to safety.”³

You know the goal of this world and our sinful flesh, what Satan tempts our sinful flesh is all gain and no pain. But personal pleasure without Christ can only result in eternal disaster, all pain and no gain. Isaiah’s question still stands: ***“Who of us can live with a consuming fire? Who of us can live in a place that burns without end?”*** (Isaiah 33:14f) To ***walk righteously and speak blamelessly*** is only possible for repentant souls trusting in the works and merits of Jesus Christ. He suffered all **pain** for our sin that we might have the eternal **gain** of everlasting bliss with God in heaven. **Exercise Endurance** to keep...

in step with the Spirit (v.25)

Where do we get the strength to **Exercise Endurance**? ***“[Since] we live by the spirit, let us also walk in step with it.”*** “Christians obtain strength to enable them to resist the lusts of the flesh...[because] they have received the Holy Spirit through faith, and [know] they have a gracious God. Thus their hearts become filled with love and desire to obey God and to shun sin. Consequently they resist and refuse to obey the lusts of the flesh, lest they make God angry again. Although in this conflict they still feel their weakness, the Law nevertheless cannot condemn them, because through faith they are and remain in Christ.”⁴ He makes our sin as white as snow, then leaves footprints for us to follow.

“All people want to feel good about themselves, to lower the stress in their lives...to feel loved and want to express...sexuality...to be somebody...long for praise.” Sins of envy drive impatience, forgetting all our possessions and skills are gifts of God. “Boasting denies God’s gifts, insults the giver, and inflates the braggart with nothing but self-aggrandizing gas.”⁵ All possessions and appetites are passing away, cannot satisfy, leave people cold and spiritually dead. Only Christ can heal.

And only Christ can keep us **in step with the Spirit**. Imagine watching a senior run a race he’s run many times. But in the back stretch he trips. Later everyone is asking why? “I don’t know. I tripped over a line on the track.” It was always there, but sometimes we draw lines in our faith life that God has not laid out. The bottom line for God is not our political process. Sure He wants us engaged and standing up for life wherever we can. But God’s bottom line is eternity. ***“Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. To be sure, whatever a man sows, he will also reap. Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh. But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up.”*** (Galatians 6:7-9)

Two extremes can cripple Christians. You can get so angry you’re over the edge like James and John the “sons of thunder” wanting to call down God’s wrath on a Samaritan village. Is that sentiment gone? Not judging by the double bumper sticker in front of me yesterday: “Gigantic Meteorite 2020 – Just end it already!” But ***“the Son of Man did not come to destroy people’s souls, but to save them.”*** ***Then they went to another village.”*** (Luke 9:56) Let God draw the lines while we keep **in step with the Spirit**.

³ Braun, John A. “THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER GOD GIVES US TO DO HIS WORK.” *WLQ*, Spring 2006, pp. 99f.

⁴ Luther’s *Postil*. Lenker, ed. 14th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, Galatians 5:16-24. Baker, re-print 1988, Vol. VIII, p. 256.

⁵ Jeske, M. A. (2002). *James, Peter, John, Jude* (1 John 2:16-17, pp. 221–222). NPH (1-800-662-6022).

For *The Preacher’s Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.newlifeshoreview.com . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126

Over the top angry or withdrawn, not caring anymore, kind of *lukewarm* like the Christianity Jesus wants to spit out of His mouth. (Revelation 3:16) Picture your first track meet as a freshman. You want to pace yourself because four laps for a mile seem really long. The starter's pistol is up. "On your marks, get set..." all runners race for the flag just around the bend – except you. Now your leg is bloody from someone's cleats. In the race of life, you need to stay **In step with the Spirit**. Experience teaches that matching the pace of the lead runner means more wins in the end. Surely there is a time and place for the heat and intensity of "*passions and desires*." Paul the prisoner told his dear Philippians: "***I am pulled in two directions, because I have [a burning] desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.***" (Philippians 1:23) Meanwhile, **Exercise Endurance** and keep living up to what we've already attained (Philippians 3:16) in Christ. This sets us on course to...

can the conceit (v.26)

A classmate is quite sure he's the best runner out there. And he keeps beating you. But you notice how he flails when he runs? Wasting energy here and there like Christians following every strange idea and passion that comes along. They're so sure they're right no matter what God's Word says. Meanwhile, you work on your form to "run silent, run deep" – no extra noise to waste energy, no complaining about the pride of others. You **can the conceit** so you can **Exercise Endurance** to win.

So your track coach sometimes seems sadistic? Every year at the beginning of the season he busses the team five miles away to see if you can get back by suppertime or at least before study hall. Mostly out of shape himself, is it aggravating when he suggests you run up on your toes? While you're wondering what distance runner does that, your calves are aching for days. But gradually, your times improve...records are broken...success comes where you least expected it. Coaches for discipleship?

"Let us not become conceited, provoking one another and envying one another." Some may remember an NFL coach on the sidelines, face masking a player in front of a national audience. This is the only use of this rare word (προκαλέω) in the Holy Spirit's Greek original of the New Testament. "***Provoking***" – no good! The flipside is all good. Instead of *provoking* one another, "***Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. Let us not neglect meeting together (ἐπισυναγωγή), as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage (παρακαλέω) each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***" (Hebrews 10:24–25 EHV)

Such encouragement comes from God's miracles of Word and sacrament in converted hearts. Even where illness is allowed by our gracious God, he creates "***living sacrifices***" (Romans 12:1) to radiate God's love. A young salesman thought he was complete on his own. But then in January 1992, he was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. God finally had his attention. He started adult instructions with earnest, faithful worship. Midweek Lenten services always found him dressed in a bright purple athletic suit, smiling with gratitude to hear of God's grace in Christ. As his body wasted away, his spirit was soaring, looking forward to completed redemption in Christ at the Last Judgment. For nine months **Endurance** had a job to do, telling everyone who would listen how God got through to save him from his sins. Steve Williams left a legacy of thanks in our round window above the altar at [New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church](#) in Shoreview, Minnesota. God's goodness in Christ empowers patient **Endurance** of the saints. "***Let your light shine...that everyone may glorify your Father in heaven.***"

So shall I run and never tire Like the ones you sent before – Sing in trouble, laugh at fire, Knowing you will all restore. Since you ruled are reigning still, all is governed by your will."⁶ Amen.

⁶ Mark A. Cordes, NWC graduation speech, May, 1980.