

"He Who Endures to the End"

Sane and Sensible Perspectives on the Last Days

This one stern statement of Jesus should end the debate about the timing of the Rapture. Listen to it in context of the teaching of Jesus on the Great Tribulation. A pre-Tribulation escape from danger and death is nothing anyone would have to "endure." Yet, Jesus warns us that we had better be prepared to hunker down and endure to the end—not to the beginning, or some supposed mid-point—but to the very end of the times He describes in order to be saved.



8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:8-14 ESV

He Who Endures

Can we please just let this one word of Jesus speak for itself? I can understand why there is such a great desire to twist it out of all recognition. Who wants to have to undergo suffering and dangerous times? Who would volunteer for this? Nevertheless, if this is what is coming, we definitely need to get ready for it. And that means getting what used to be called the "intestinal fortitude" to keep marching forward. But why worry about any of this if there is a way to explain it away?

Sadly, there is not. In this passage Jesus is giving His great discourse on the End Times. He has already detailed some truly terrible events, such as wars and rumors of wars, famine, pestilence and earthquakes. These He says are but "the beginning of the birth pangs." This means that worse is coming! Indeed, it is. There will be tribulation and persecution, along with great deception. These will be accompanied by lawlessness (by unbelievers) and falling away from the faith (by believers whose love for God has "grown cold"). It is in the context of this kind of pressure that Jesus declares that "the one who endures to the end will be saved." Will those who don't even try to endure be saved? Please don't bet on it!

Nothing could be more obvious that this: "enduring to the end" means that you've got to go through something you don't want to go through. We only say we "endured" a party if it was dreadfully dull. We never say we had to "endure" a steak dinner with cake and ice cream for desert. It would be equally absurd to say that we will have to "endure" being taken out of harm's way by the Rapture. How did we ever get such an outlandish idea stuck in our collective head?



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No, it's obvious, isn't it, that we will have to endure going through all of the desperate, dangerous times that Jesus describes.

When Does It End?

How long will that season of hard trial for us last? It will last until the gospel of the kingdom is "proclaimed throughout the whole world." The most powerful proclamations of the gospel, the most convincing witnesses of faith in the living God, come from those who are under duress. Those who are living fat and happy, whose lives are untouched by trial or trouble, may indeed know the Lord, but few are ever persuaded by their testimony. Unbelievers can always say (as Satan said of Job), "Of course they believe in God. Look how well things are going for them. But just let God (if there is a God) pull back the blessing and then we'll see how they sing." Jesus is evidently planning to use the faithful prayers and witness of His believing Church in order to gain a great Harvest just as He said, "at the end of the age."

Let's ask again, "How long will that season of hard trial for us last?" According to Jesus' own words, the end will come once this final witness of the gospel is "proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations." It is only once this happens, that the "end will come." Have you ever wondered why Christians will be called to undergo trial and suffering at the End of the Age? This is it. The pressure of the Last Days is designed to "squeeze" out of the faithful, believing Church, such a witness that will bring even some the most hardened souls to eternal salvation.

On this side of Eternity, listening to our fallen nature, we may not want any part of that. But look beyond. See the eternal realms. See by faith how important it is that not even one soul destined for salvation should be lost. Was not our own eternal life deemed worthy of horrendous suffering by our glorious Lord? Jesus is in us. Somehow, He will help us rise to the occasion. Somehow we will find through Him the grace and strength of heart to "endure to the end."

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About the Author: [Steve Evans](#)

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