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Enduring and Enjoying the journey with God

Recently we have experienced the Okanagan summer heat. Forecasters have told us we probably will have a hot rest of this summer. We've already seen some headlines telling us B.C. is set to bake under the heat, and we've experienced it. Some of us enjoy the heat, while others try their best to endure it. The heat comes with benefits and dangers.

We all face times of heat, even scorching heat, personally, spiritually. The blistering attitudes and comments, the furnace of trials and suffering.



Heat is used in the Bible to describe difficult, traumatic times. Jeremiah chapter 17 sets up a contrast between people who trust in people and those who trust in God.

“This is what the LORD says: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. For he will be like a bush in the desert, and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt that is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water that extends its roots by a stream, and does not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought, nor cease to yield fruit’” (5-8).

Hot, scorching circumstances come to all of us. But God's people do not have to fear, be panicked, loose perspective, wilt or be devastated. The key is trusting God as we keep His purpose and truth in focus. You recall the catechism, “the chief end [purpose] of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” You see, we don't just have to endure, as important as that is. We are to, we can enjoy the journey with God.

Let me be clear, endurance, hanging in there, bearing up under is important. We need to endure. To endure is not the same thing as to enjoy, and it is vital. The writer of Hebrews challenges us,

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised” (10:35-36).

One of the great rewards of endurance is receiving the blessings of God's promises. A bit later in that letter he tells us that Jesus is our example for enduring. Jesus,

“the originator and perfecter of the faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Then he makes the application,

“For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (12:2-3).

Yes, we are to endure. Jesus *endured* the cross. He *despised* the shame for, because of the joy set before Him of providing for our salvation, having us with Him forever, and reigning in heaven. We are to, as the apostle Paul told Timothy, suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). But we are also to enjoy the journey with God in fair or foul times, in scorching heat or freezing cold.

We can experience that as we keep the goal set before us: serving, honoring, glorifying God now and then being with Him forever. We can experience this as we stay close to Jesus, our almighty friend, the friend “who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). To do that we must be intentional, disciplined to draw close to Him by reading, studying and applying the Bible, by being constant in prayer, by seeking first His kingdom and righteousness.

Enjoy the journey with God!

Pastor Lyle