

Why Must Believers Suffer and Endure?

International Bible Lessons

2 Timothy 2:8-15

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“If we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us” (2 Timothy 2:12—NRSV).

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“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Timothy 2:12—KJV).

Following Jesus Christ requires endurance, because in this life believers struggle against wickedness, and “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). Nevertheless, Paul wrote that “suffering produces endurance,” and suffering can benefit believers for “endurance produces character” (Romans 5:3-4). Patient and faithful endurance under afflictions and hardships will produce in Christ’s followers the necessary qualities to reign with Christ in His kingdom. After Christ returns, believers will visibly reign with Him on Earth. Rather than look forward to a boring life of endless leisure, those who follow Jesus Christ anticipate service that is even more rewarding throughout eternity. In the coming kingdom of God, all those who reign with Christ will love and serve others, just as they do today, but with greater helpfulness.

The second part of our key verse may seem troubling, but Paul sought to affirm that Jesus Christ would not compel anyone to receive Him as their Lord and Savior. Those who reject the lordship of Christ over themselves; those who reject the free gift of salvation and eternal life that Christ offers – made possible by His sacrificial death – will not be forced to follow Jesus or His way of life. If someone chooses to deny Jesus Christ, He will openly acknowledge their responsible decision and deny their allegiance, rather than try to force them into an enduring friendship with Him. Under the pressures of temptation, Peter denied knowing Christ before others. When Peter recognized his sin, he wept. After his repentance, Jesus restored Peter to His service. — © Copyright 2011 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. How would you explain the gospel of Jesus Christ to someone today? What points would you want to be certain to emphasize? Why would you want to emphasize these points?

2. What does it mean to die with Jesus Christ? What does it mean to live with Jesus Christ? How should these two facts impact a believer’s daily life?

3. What might you say to someone who regrets the fact that they have denied Christ or have been faithless to Him?

4. What kind of wrangling in the church or among believers should be avoided today? How can this wrangling ruin those who are listening, whether believers or unbelievers?

5. In what activities can believers participate in to be prepared to “rightly explain the word of truth”? Why should believers always be prepared to do this? What difference would it make if we prayed for opportunities to share the Biblical truths that we have learned? Pray for someone today who needs to accept the truth of the gospel. Pray that someone will rightly explain the gospel to them.

Read the verse by verse commentary on this lesson at the BibleLessonForum.com. See the recommended study and worship resources at SmallChurchResources.com.