

Finish Line
The Narrow Road
Feb. 16, 2025

The Narrow Road review:

Matt. 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

- Narrow Road: "Follow Me"
- Beach: We are a new creation
- Forest: A purposeful adventure
- Mountains: Climbing the mountain of relationships and responsibilities, with headwinds.
- Valleys: God uses the hardest times of life redemptively.
- Desert: God takes people to the desert for refining as we learn to find deepest joy in Him

DAY 1: The necessity of endurance is normative. Endurance takes us to the finish line!

1. The New Testament puts a lot of emphasis on patience! If you have followed our Narrow Road series, this will come as no surprise. Endurance is needed in five of life's metaphors: forest, mountains, valleys, deserts, and finishing well.

2. Similar characteristics are patient endurance, perseverance, and long-suffering.

3. When difficulty strikes us its easy to ask God, "Why?" We need to remember that to persevere in this life is normative.

4. The churches in Colossae were all new churches, filled with new Christians. The apostle Paul writes this letter to them. What did Paul pray for these new believers?

Col. 1:9 And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that:

"... you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...

... ¹⁰ to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, ...

...bearing fruit in every good work and ...

...increasing in the knowledge of God."

5. What a great list to pray for new Christians! But Paul is not finished with his prayer...

Colossians 1:11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy...

6. Paul piles up synonyms of perseverance, including qualities prefixed with "all" and one defined as divine in nature!

7. Are you in need of this kind of perseverance?

8. What strikes you about the normative need for perseverance?

DAY 2: Temptation: to become weary, faint-hearted, and give up

1. Even the great apostle Paul was not immune from trouble, and in fact, was stretched “far beyond his ability to endure.” In the verses below underline the words trouble, distressed, suffering, pressure, despair, sentence of death, and deadly peril.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

2. How many underlined words did you count? _____

3. What strikes you from Paul’s honest words about this season of his life?

4. Look back at our passage for today? What truths about who God is kept Paul moving with endurance? (Look for at least five truths).

5. The challenge is to not grow weary and then lose heart.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

6. What reasons does Paul give for us to continue to do good?

7. What strikes you from Paul’s example of endurance?

DAY 3: Perseverance illustrated by Paul

1. The young Christians in the new church in Corinth were irritated with Paul regarding his first letter to them. Some of them questioned Paul's character and service. Some unfavorably compared him to other servants of Christ.

2. In order to lend credibility to Paul's message and writing, he displays his commitment to the Lord and God's kingdom by his life...

2 Corinthians 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. ³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

3. What strikes you about Paul's suffering for the gospel?

2 Tim. 2:3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

⁵ Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

4. What is Paul's point from the life of a(n):

a. Soldier?

b. Athlete?

c. Farmer?

What strikes you from Paul's life and teaching on endurance?

DAY 4: 3 metaphors and 3 examples of endurance.

1. Under each of the verses on metaphors, jot down what strikes you regarding endurance.

Metaphor #1: a fighting spirit vs. passive spirit

2 Timothy 4:6 *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.* ⁷ **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

⁸ *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Metaphor #2: whole-hearted vs. divided heart

1 Chronicles 28:9 *And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and **serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind**; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever.*

Metaphor #3: single-minded vs double-minded

Jeremiah 32:39 *I will give them **singleness of heart** and **action**, so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them.* ⁴⁰ *I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.* ⁴¹ *I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.*

2. Luke records three short vignettes regarding the commitments of a disciple. Under each verse jot down you think the point Jesus is making.

Luke 9:58 *Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”*

Luke 9:59 *He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”* ⁶⁰ *Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”*

Luke 9:61 *Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”* ⁶² *Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

3. What strikes you from these three metaphors and three vignettes about endurance?

DAY 5: Endurance is spurred by hope—joy of anticipation

1. "The **hope** I provide anchors a weary, empty, troubled soul in My plan. Beneath difficult feelings, **hope** encourages by giving you reason to persevere with **the joy of anticipation**. *Happiness* depends on present blessing, which I do not guarantee. **Joy depends on future hope**, which I do guarantee." -Larry Crabb

*1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one **gets the prize**? Run in such a way as **to get the prize**.²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to **get a crown** that will not last, but **we do it to get a crown that will last forever**.²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

2. What is Paul's point in these verses?

3. All week, we have looked at multiple examples of different kinds of suffering and trials. What we don't hear enough of is that God sees all of our trials, and promises to redeem and reward us!

*2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore **we do not lose heart**. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

4. What strikes you about Paul's contrasts of:

a. Our outward body vs. our inward heart –

b. Momentary troubles vs. eternal glory –

c. What is seen vs. what is unseen –

5. We have focused on Paul's example of endurance.

6. Let's finish with the example of Jesus:

Hebrews 12:3 Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.

7. What is your biggest takeaways from this week on finishing well? Endurance?