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Endure Until The End

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There is a scripture in Matthew 24:13 that says, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved". There are several different ways to look at that verse, but I want to use this as a foundation to a testimony I experienced years ago. It is proof positive that as Christians it's not enough to walk the "word", but to live it by example.

Why is this important? Because the world needs to see God WORK. Unbelievers don't see any difference between Christianity and any other religion. Heck, if they're ALL talk, what makes Christianity any different? Now, a believer knows the difference, but the unbelievers don't. THESE are the ones God wants to save, but how can He if He isn't able to show why He is God?

Read Acts 9:34-42. When Peter performed the miracle on Aeneas, restoring that paralyzed person, what happened? Verse 35 says, "all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord". And when Peter raised Dorcas from the dead, what happened? Verse 42 says, "And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord".

What are we establishing? That there MUST be a

difference between other religions that are only in words and man's reasoning, and God, Who is able to do only what God can do. Most religions talk the talk, but none can walk the walk. These incredible acts prove that God IS God, and because these acts happen through the name of Jesus, it also proves that indeed, Jesus is the Son of God. Paul said in I Corinthians 4:20 that "The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power". He is telling us that we have to be able to allow God to demonstrate Himself, so that believers and especially unbelievers, can see that God just isn't sitting on top of a mountain watching us. He is eager to get involved in our lives, to help us.

This is why testimonies are critical to the Kingdom of God. People out there right now need a word of hope; something that reminds us that no matter how difficult things are, if we are willing to call on God, and believe, then all things are possible. Here's proof:

In 2001 I had a 3-year probation, and one of the stipulations was that I had to pay, within that period of time, almost \$10,000. I knew it was too much for me to pay, even with a college degree. How can I get a job, pick up the pieces after doing time, with a record, and possibly afford to pay 10 grand in 3 years? Most of you wouldn't think much of it. If you can't pay, you can't pay. But because I was under probation, if I couldn't pay, I could go to prison for 3 years!

It was very stressful because for 3 years this would hang over my head like a vulture. So I did what I could. I got a job working for a gospel radio station. That didn't work out as well at all- in fact, the church paid me only \$3 an hour, and TWICE the checks bounced. It took an act of the Labor Department to get what was legally owed to me. I then went to work as a bagger/stocker at the grocery store in town. And while it paid, I ended up losing my job when the local paper did a front page story titled "Local DJ Takes Church To DOL" (Department of Labor). The story, while it did not say anything negative about me, presented that I was an ex-con and it didn't help that the pastor of the church that did me wrong at the church lied to the newspaper, saying, "you can't trust anything an ex-con says". A bad report by a "man of God" caused the store I worked for to play politics, and public relations, and I ended up losing my job.

I then managed to land a job as a local talk show host for a nearby local cable TV station. I did all the legwork to find guests, brief them on the show, invited them and interviewed them on television. The show was called "Tri-County Talk", and it was to showcase events in my town, and surrounding towns. And while it was exciting and meaningful, it wasn't paying anything.

And when I say it wasn't paying anything, that's EXACTLY what I mean. I was making NOTHING- zero dollars!

I was hoping I could at least get the station to pay

me something for bringing them a show that was generating revenue. But the station said they couldn't afford it. So for 6 weeks, I worked for nothing.

It really seemed that every single attempt to make money, and pay off this huge debt, was failing. It's like Satan slapping down every single attempt I did, because nothing in those 3 years was working. I tried to pick back up my fragrance oil business; I couldn't even get it off the ground. I tried working with my professor from college to start a local acting company, to provide local origination pieces for local TV, radio and even stage. That never got off the ground. Nothing- nothing was working, and I was running out of time.

I called a ministry for prayer, needing a miracle. The nice lady on the other end listened to my prayer request, then prayed for me over the phone. After she finished, she reassured me that everything's going to be ok, to just believe. When she spoke, I at FIRST agreed, then slid into the problem, starting to explain all the difficulties I was having. It was then she did something kinda radical; she cut me off!

In the middle of my rambling, the sweet lady cut off my sentence, and she said to me, "We've already prayed over that". This was a shock to me, because I was kinda offended that she interrupted my "pity party". But I got the message, and the importance of what she did. She had to "nip it in the bud", before it grew. We prayed for an answer, yet there I

was, about to whine about the problem. She did the right thing in stopping me from stepping on my prayer. I learned then that I'm going to have to trust God on this.

3 years melted to three months, then three weeks. Although I tried my very best to get a job, and make payments, I fell woefully behind, and there was no way short of a miracle to pay it. All looked lost; I might as well prepare to go back to prison. Yet, I still kept hope alive, even though I was unemployed. How am I going to pay about \$6000 with no job, a record, and days left to pay it? There WAS no way.

Sadly, the day came, and my probation officer had to serve me the papers. He didn't want to do it, he saw that I did all I could; nothing was working for me. But he had to serve me the papers. I would have to go to court in a few days, and likely go to prison. If we could come up with the money in a day or two, perhaps there's hope. But because the deadline had passed, I was now in violation.

I remember this day so well; I'm on the computer at home, writing some stuff, while my mom is trying everything in her power to get a loan. She looks at me, with sad eyes, holding the phone and says to me, "baby, I can't get the money". I felt so sorry for my mom, she's doing all she can, and I was out of options weeks ago.

Yet, I said this to mom, "Don't worry, the day's not over yet".

How on earth could I have the strength to say that, in the face of certain defeat? I'm as good as in prison, yet I still spoke in faith! Mom was shocked, and asked how I could remain so calm. I told her that somehow, things would work out. After she left, I got up from my computer, walked to my bedroom, closed the door, sat down on the chair in my room, and prayed. I needed a miracle in the worst way.

Now, I cannot remember exactly what I said, but what I DO know is this: About five minutes AFTER I prayed, the phone rang. The very people that refused my mom the loan, now offered it to her. In lightning fashion, I went from no hope to having a prayer answered. We got the money, and paid the debt the day we went to court. The money from the Credit Union, plus another \$1500 given to me from my professor, was enough to pay the debt.

But the story wasn't quite over.

Even though we had the money, I was still in violation, because it wasn't paid on time. So we talked with our lawyer, and he told us that there were now three options:

One, the judge could accept the money, and reinstate me another 3 years on my probation.

Two, he could take the money and sentence me anyway for up to 3 years in prison.

Three, he could accept the money, and release me, making me a free man.

From what I heard about this judge, he could be a little hard on people.

So I went to court, not knowing if I'd come home. Needless to say, I was very nervous, but the end result was all in my favor. I walked out of the courtroom a free man. When I got home, I posted an entry on my blog, and some of the prison support sites I wrote for in 2004. Because I chose to endure until the very end, I was saved.

This testimony is one of many I have experienced because of my faith in God. Now, there's no doubt that millions of people could just as easily say to me, "Well, I did the same thing, but I failed". I don't doubt at all that many of you caught the failing end of lost hope. I've been in many situations where I said to myself, "I thought I was in faith, why didn't it work"?

My testimony of answered prayer is to hopefully encourage you that if you're going to get an answer to prayer, you've got to SEE IT THROUGH! What do I mean by that? Everybody thinks that God will answer their prayer as long as we're happy and feeling good about it. Folks, that's NOT how prayers are answered. If you're basing results on how you feel, then you're likely going to lose every prayer. Satan

will manipulate your feelings, knowing that if you trust your feelings, you can't possibly trust God. Faith and feeling rarely go together.

Too often, we give up at the first sign of trouble. Oh, we might start off great, all optimistic and expectant. But when the winds of tribulation come, we turn to God as if He changed His mind, and we feed into the circumstances rather than the promise. Sounds familiar?

Doesn't it sound like Peter walking on the water? As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, (the Word), he was able to do the impossible. But when he took his eyes off the Word, and started to consider the waves and the wind, he began to sink. We lose more blessings by looking at the circumstances rather than the promise.

In my testimony, I did in fact see all the problems. Hey, it's not like I could ignore that I was thousands in debt, and looking at prison time! But I kept focused on the Word of God, and did all I could to stay positive. If that meant watching cartoons to keep laughing, so be it. If it meant playing video games to stay occupied, so be it. But when the opportunities came to be productive, I also did what I could.

I continued to write for people with loved ones in prison; I continued to pray, read scriptures, call ministries for prayer, and watch religious programs. I was in a war

against Satan, to determine which is truly greater: God's Word and mercy, or the circumstances?

We, as a people, give up too soon on our help from God, and it has cost us MANY blessings. If you're not getting answers to your prayers, you're not only cheating yourself of seeing God bless you, but you're also preventing unbelievers from finding God. This goes back to why testimonies are so important. An unbeliever- or even a believer, reading this can be encouraged that the same God who helped me can easily do it for you, but you've got to be willing to see it through to the end.

If you are willing to believe, no matter what, then God will indeed honor His Word...but you gotta endure...even to the end.