

## Witnesses from the Cloud

Whether it be from the pulpit or through our Wednesday night study this past year, we have heard the regular call from the book of Hebrews to endure to the end as our faith is challenged. We are encouraged to, **“run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...”** (Heb 12:1-2a). Similarly, our Sunday school class has been challenged in the book of James to note that the testing of our faith actually produces endurance (James 1:3). And so, as we wait for the return of the Lord, we are to, **“be patient,”** and, **“establish your hearts”** (5:7-8).

Yet when we are in the midst of trial or buried deep in suffering, we sometimes wonder how we will be able to answer the call.

Interestingly, in both Hebrews and James we are given many examples of those who have gone before us – Able, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, Job, etc., to encourage us as we endure patiently and set our hearts on Jesus. All faced of these faced significant trials and all endured to the end. Sometimes we need to see His hands and feet (so to speak) displayed through the lives of other human beings.

When I am struggling to endure, one of my favorite sources of encouragement is Allen F. Gardner. He is virtually unknown, but is an incredible example of enduring with joy until the end. I would highly encourage you to find a copy of, *“A Memoir of Allen F. Gardner”* by John W. Marsh (free on Google Books). His life is an incredible picture of endurance for the sake of the Gospel.

Gardner’s list of harsh challenges and deep sacrifice would fit squarely into the faith hall of fame found in Hebrews 11. Throughout decades of deep hardship and thwarted attempts to share the gospel among unreached people groups, his passion for the Gospel and love for Christ only grew. The challenges never stopped, nor did his endurance. His final months of life, from a human perspective, were crushing. Shipwrecked in a barren land and completely isolated from help, he watched his fellow crew and ministry partners slowly die of sickness or starvation. Though freezing and malnourished, he daily wrapped himself in the word of God and prayer and found his heart warm and his spirit full. It is amazing to read his diary entries. They are saturated with the word and filled with praise, often expressed in the form of poetry. Here is an example of an entry made amidst a day challenged with sickness, an unsuccessful search for a rescue vessel, and the difficult decision to further ration food that was already in short supply. I trust that it will be fuel for your endurance run as you patiently wait for the Lord’s return.

Pastor Brad

*Pioneer Cavern, May 8, 1851: – Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me. Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord. In thee is my trust.” Ps 138:7, and 141:8*

*Sweet peace have they, whose minds are stayed  
Firm on the Rock, in Zion laid:*

No anxious cares disturb their rest.  
Whate're of earthy ills betide,  
Amid the storm secure they ride,  
Their souls in patience are possessed.

Children of Him, whose watchful eye  
Regards the ravens when they cry,  
Why need they fear impending ill?  
They know their hairs are numbered all,  
Nor can the smallest sparrow fall,  
Without their Father's sovereign will.

Though all around be dark and drear,  
Nor sun, nor moon, nor stars appear,  
And every earthly Cherith dries;  
Faith bears the drooping spirit up,  
And sweetens every bitter cup,  
A bow in every cloud descries.

The Lord, who gave, may surely take,  
The bruised reed he will not break,  
He knows that we are but dust.  
The oil and meal alike may fail,  
The whelming storm may long prevail,  
Yet on his promise we will trust.

Whate're in wisdom he denies,  
A richer boon his grace supplies –  
A peace the world can ne'er bestow.  
Though nought remain, we're not bereft,  
What most we value, still is left, --  
The Rock, whence living waters flow.

Then come what may, we'll humbly wait,  
His arm was never bared too late,  
The promise will not, cannot fail.  
Though dark the night, the morn will break,  
His own the Lord will not forsake:  
The Prayer of faith shall yet prevail,  
And we shall deem the trial sweet,  
That laid us waiting at his feet.