There are certain things that need always to accompany us throughout our path as believers. Things that are fundamental. One of these things is the perseverance. As believers we need to have perseverance.

Let us have a look at a verse that talks about it. This verse is Hebrews 12:1, 2

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us,* and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

These are the verses preceding the verses about the correction and the Father – son relationship, we discussed in the previous chapter. It says that we need to run with endurance the race. We need to endure and persevere. What do we need to persevere on? Obviously to run the race as this verse states, but what exactly does running the race represent? Do we need to persevere reading the Bible (which obviously is right)? Or maybe going to church (which is also right to do), or having certain religious habits? The verse itself gives us clearance by saying: “let us lay aside every weight, and **the sin which so easily ensnares *us****,* and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”. (When I talk about perseverance and endurance, I am referring to the same thing, as “to endure” means to persevere in something.) The verse tells us to lay aside every weight and the **sin** which so easily ensnares us. **So, we understand that to endure is not just about persevering in certain religious practices, which might be right and it needs to be performed, but above all is about keeping ourselves away form the sin.** It is to fight with it and to resist it. Looking to lay it aside and not to walk in its ways. This is what perseverance is having to do with. We need to persevere in purity and to walk on the right path, which is obviously not possible by ourselves, but with the help of Jesus. That’s why the next verse tells us to look unto Him who is the author and finisher of our faith. He only can help us to run the race and to be on the right track. We cannot do it with our own strength.

There is another passage in this regard.

9“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. 10And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. **13But he who endures to the end shall be saved.** Matthew 24:9-13

This passage refers to the situations that the believers will have to go through at the last times, but what it says is actual for us today as it says: “he who endures to the end shall be saved”. In its context it speaks about the trials that will come at the last times as there will be reasons for which someone might leave the way of God and go astray, so that he can escape somehow the hardships. That’s why this passage exhorts us to endure. In the present time in which we live people can also be tempted to leave the way and not to endure. It might be for the trials that they are going through, and in a way to live easier they might choose to stop walking on the way. The Bible tells us that there are two ways – a narrow one, with trials and difficulties and a broad one, one that is much easier to walk on.

13“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13, 14

Obviously, those who are saved, know the reason for which they would walk on the narrow one, preserving themselves pure and avoiding sin, and those who haven’t encountered truly God yet, would not find much reasons to follow the narrow road. Maybe they will do for a while, but when they start encountering more trials and they have to really give up things, they will stop. That’s why it is fundamental that a person finds Jesus first. Obviously when we talk about a narrow road with trials and surrender, we are not saying the Christian life is mainly a life of sadness and continual hardships, with no joy. Believers do have sorrows, but they have more joy and strength to face them. At times they may appear more joyful than other worldly persons as they have real hope and are satisfied of the life God is giving them.

Yes, the ones who are saved know the reasons for following God and endure, but it looks like the verse in Matthew 24:13 saying:**“**But he who endures to the end shall be saved” talks about believers as well. Even if they clearly know the reasons to endure and carry on, they still need to be exhorted. People amongst different denominations discuss sometimes if the salvation could be lost or not, but here I am not going to give a personal opinion on it. I just know what could happen with me if I don’t endure in God’s way and if I don’t keep myself away from sin. I know myself and I know the direction my heart will take. That’s why it is good for us to follow the right way and to listen to the exhortation the Bible is giving us to persevere. People can obviously fall into sin but they have to stand up and go to God. They mustn’t persevere into it.

Paul describes well in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 what is to stay on the path and run the race.

24Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it.* 25And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown.* 26Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. 27But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

In the last verse he says that he disciplines his body and brings it into subjection, lest he should become disqualified. It again speaks about perseverance and running the race in a specific manner so that he doesn’t get disqualified. This manner and way is surely personal to each believer, but is definitely having to do with persevering in the way God wants us to. This can only be obtained through Him. Only through His wisdom we can know which is the manner and have the right guidance from Him. Yes, this is an exhortation for a believer, because the believers are those who run this race, but which is the main reason for which people don’t persevere on the Christian way? The main one as we said before is that they don’t actually participate on this race and they don’t understand the reason to persevere on this road. To persevere means that a person perseveres in the faith and keeps himself pure. A person doesn’t walk this path mainly because he doesn’t know the reason for which to walk on it. That person might have common knowledge about what pleases God and what not, but as he is not personally convinced, he won’t understand it completely and in consequence, he will not find a reason for it and will not run the race. Understanding is fundamental. Not just intellectually knowing something, but understanding it with our heart.

There is the explanation of the parable of the sower in Mathew 13:18-23 that gives us an insight about it.

18“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and **does not understand *it****,* then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and **understands** *it,* who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

We can see that this parable is dealing with understanding the word of God which is something so fundamental. If we don’t understand it, the whole word for us will be as a parable, it will give us just a comparison of what does it mean but we won’t be able to comprehend truly the spiritual meaning of it. The gospel tells us that even if we have ears and we listen, we won’t be able to truly hear and understand.

15For the hearts of this people have grown dull.  
*Their* ears are hard of hearing,  
And their eyes they have closed,  
Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,  
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,  
So that I should heal them.’

This verse in Matthew 13:15 tells us that the ears of the people were hard of hearing. What we need to have is a spiritual hearing and ears.

9He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Matthew 13:9

Not knowing the meaning of something, will prevent us from following it.

The seed (the word of God) which fell on the wayside is the one that wasn’t received by a good heart and consequentially wasn’t understood. The one which fell on the good ground (good heart), is the one that was understood and bore fruit. **Obviously no one is capable of having a good heart by himself.** There is no one good (Romans 3:10-12). If someone is standing today or is having anything good, it is because of God. Only He can give someone a receptive and understanding heart.

It is fundamental for a person to understand. If this doesn’t happen, that person will not follow the Lord and will not find a reason to endure either. Why live a pure and a holy life and not to live freely in a sin? If we don’t find a real reason for it and we are not convinced in it, we will never do it. As we said, to endure means to carry on walking on the way of the Lord and not to get ensnared by the sin. This is the Lord’s first desire for us beside any other ministry or calling we might attend. It doesn’t mean that a believer doesn’t sin at all. He might sin, but he will eventually come back to God.

It is important to know that we need to set our eyes on Jesus and carry on the right direction and that He exhorts us to **endure** and go toward the reward set for us in heaven. Without this, after a failure, we can easily fall into desperation and get into the trap of the devil. Hebrews 12:1 is telling us to lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us. The author of Hebrews knew about the of sin.

One of the passages that encourages me to follow the way, despite seeing myself vulnerable and with no strength at a time is the one in Isaiah 35:8

8A highway shall be there, and a road,  
And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness.  
The unclean shall not pass over it,  
But it *shall be* for others.  
Whoever walks the road, although a fool,  
Shall not go astray.

It says that whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. What is important is that the person is on the road. Many times I’ve seen myself as a fool. Not as a fool who doesn’t follow the Lord, but as a fool in my ways and behavior as a believer. Sometimes I don’t act wisely at all. What encourages me in this passage is that He will help us to persevere and be on the road, He will sustain us even though we might be weak and see ourselves incapable. We don’t want to be such, but we eventually are in this way sometimes.

Yes, this is for those who are weak, but how can someone carry on the road and not, how can he find reasons to do it?

There is a story that I heard a whole ago and it is a story of a dog chasing a rabbit. There was this dog that was going after a rabbit, and as it was passing by some other dogs, they saw him running and barking, and joined him too. So, all of them were barking and running together. Soon it happened though that most of them retreated and stopped running as none of them saw actually the rabbit. Only the dog which saw it, kept on running till the end. What does it mean? Why is that not all of them persevered? Because they hadn’t seen the rabbit. In our life this means that we need to see Jesus. Only in this way we can carry on the road and persevere. Otherwise, someone could be running without knowing the real purpose and just because he saw others doing so. We need to personally see Him in our life.

We need to qualify for the (gara) so that we can be oon the road. Without qualifying, we cannot persevere, we cannot run the truck because we are not on it. We qualify by accepting Jesus in our heart. By repenting sincerely beliving in Him. This is the salvation. For those who are qualified and are already on the truck, God is telling to persevere, to look right in front of them and to set their sight on Jesus and the reward awaiting them.