

Perseverance, Weights, and Looking unto Jesus

I. THE CALL TO PERSEVERE

- A. Perseverance is one of the greatest virtues that we can develop in the grace of God (Rom. 5:3-4; 15:4; 2 Cor. 6:4; 12:12; 1 Thes. 1:3; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:10-11; Heb. 6:12).

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our... (Rom 5:3-4)

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed... (1 Tim 6:11)

10 God is not unjust to forget your work...11 Show the same diligence...until the end, 12... do not become sluggish, but...through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Heb. 6:10-12)

- B. *It is a rare and beautiful miracle* to walk in steadfastness for decades in the face of daily routines, difficulties, lack, and opportunities that can distract us from our divine assignment.
- C. Perseverance speaks of being ***diligent to press into God and to do His will in small things*** with humility and gratitude. The grace of perseverance empowers us to be faithful under pressure.
- D. Perseverance includes bearing up under daily pressures as well as ***finishing our work*** instead of quitting. Finishing our work or ministry assignment speaks of persevering with diligence in the face of smallness, weakness, and resistance. Jesus finished His assignment (Jn. 4:34; 5:36; 17:4; 19:30). Paul finished his (2 Tim. 4:7-8) and prayed for believers to finish theirs (2 Thes. 1:11).

4 I have glorified You...I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. (Jn. 17:4)

24None of these things move me...so that I may finish my race with joy... (Acts 20:24)

11We also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power... (2 Thes. 1:11)

- E. Paul pressed in for the prize of being faithful to walk in the fullness of His destiny.

12Not that I have already attained...I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me [fullness of Paul's destiny]...14I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call [fullness of his assignment] of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14)

II. THE WEIGHTS THAT HINDER THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

- A. We must lay aside weights which distract and minimize our ability to run. We must look to Jesus as the source and model of what it looks like to run with endurance.

1 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, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross... (Heb. 12:1–2)

- B. Lay aside every weight: Weights that hinder our ability to run come in all shapes and sizes including: resistance from people, the mundane routines of life, the weight of opportunity, the depression of closed doors, lack of appreciation, lack of cooperation, lack of impact, lack of finances, struggling health, low energy, and troubling relationships.... Etc.
- C. We want to break our alliance with the idea of: big, happy, easy, loved, and appreciated. When fantasy of bigger and easier takes hold of our hearts we are in bondage.
- D. We measure the fruit of prayer, fasting, and the work of our hands by years, even decades, not by weeks and months.
- E. And the sin which so easily ensnares: We must lay aside the sin that hinders our ability to run. This includes the overt unrighteous acts left unprinted of, but all too often, it is the hidden way of our hearts and minds that ensnares. The bitterness, envy, jealousy, and pride, of our hearts, ensnares us, weighing us down hindering our ability to run with endurance.
- F. Looking unto Jesus: Paul prayed that we imitate the patience or perseverance of Jesus. As a man, Jesus endured the same resistance, pressures, obstacles, and opportunities that we also must endure.

5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thes. 3:5 NIV)

III. JESUS: THE PERSEVERING SERVANT (IS 49)

- A. Isaiah 49 focuses on Jesus' global mandate, elaborating on His call in 42:1-9 to establish justice. Isaiah reported on a conversation between the Father and Son (49:1-12). Jesus spoke of being commissioned to save the nations and He highlighted a few things God told Him directly.
- B. The Servant of God in this passage is Jesus, who established a covenant in (49:8) by His blood, bringing salvation to Israel and the nations (49:6), and restores the earth (49:8).

- C. Outline for Isaiah 49
49:1-7 Jesus is commissioned to save Israel and the Gentile nations
49:1-4 Jesus is called and prepared (His first coming)
49:5-7 Jesus will be worshiped by world leaders (His second coming)
49:8-12 Jesus will restore the earth and liberate prisoners
49:13 The nations will praise God for His salvation
49:14-21 The restoration of Zion will prove that God did not forget her
49:22-26 Jesus' oath to cause Gentiles to bring people to Israel.
- D. Jesus called the nations to listen to Him as He shared part of His story and conversation with the Father (49:1-4). This conversation gives insight into Jesus' perseverance at His first coming.

1“Listen, O coastlands, to Me [Jesus], and take heed, you peoples [nations] from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb...and He has made mention of My name. (Isa. 49:1-2)

1. The Father sent Gabriel to Mary at the time she conceived Jesus. Gabriel mentioned Jesus' name and His calling as the Son of the Highest sitting on the throne of David (Lk. 1:31-33).

31 “...you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David...33 and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Lk. 1:31-33)

2. “From the womb” speaks of His humanity. This Servant is a man, not the nation Israel. Jesus was not seeking to make His name great, but was called by God from the womb.

- E. Jesus' life and ministry is compared to a sharp sword and polished arrow (49:2-3).

2 And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft [arrow]; in His quiver He has hidden Me.” 3 “And He said to Me, ‘You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’ (Isa. 49:2-3)

1. ***Hidden by God:*** God hid Jesus in two ways—in His hand while making Him a polished arrow (before His ministry began) and in His quiver after His ministry began. For Jesus to be hidden meant that the fullness of His destiny was “veiled” to men until His return.
2. ***He made My mouth like a sharp sword:*** Jesus spoke words that went forth in power like a sword. The anointed proclamation of God's Word is Jesus' weapon. He engages in war and defeats His enemies by speaking anointed words.

4He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth...[to] slay the wicked. (Isa. 11:4)

3. ***He made Me a polished arrow:*** Jesus' ministry is compared to a sharp arrow that can strike the enemy with a lethal blow from a distance. Arrows are an offensive weapon that were used in long-range warfare to strike an enemy. An arrow was polished or made smooth by rubbing it until it was free from roughness and unevenness that hindered its accuracy in flight.
 4. ***Quiver:*** A quiver protects arrows from the elements. It looks like a dark, empty shaft, unless we understand what it is in God's wisdom. The quiver season can be the most difficult because God's servant has already been polished by responding rightly to God for years and has grown accustomed to being used by the Lord. It tests our faith to be hidden in the quiver.
- F. Jesus' view of His ministry in this age (49:4-5): *There were two perspectives of Jesus' ministry—* in the eyes of men Jesus' ministry appeared to be in vain, but in the eyes of God it was glorious. *All of God's servants must choose between these two perspectives.* This passage does not describe Jesus complaining; it reveals His patient confidence in God's evaluation of His life as glorious.

4 I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and in vain; yet surely My just reward is with the LORD, and My work with my God." 5And now the LORD says, who formed Me from the womb...to bring Jacob back to Him...I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD... (Isa. 49:4-5)

1. ***I have labored in vain:*** Men concluded that Jesus spent His strength in vain because He did not achieve anything notable in their eyes during His 33 years. However, God saw His life as glorious. In light of God's calling, preparation, and empowerment of Jesus, one might expect only successes, not failures or delays.
2. ***My just reward:*** Jesus had confidence in God's evaluation of His life and ministry.
3. ***Glorious in the eyes of the Lord:*** Jesus had confidence that God saw His life as glorious. He understood that the fullness of God's promises and rewards are delayed until the age to come.
4. ***Well pleased:*** The Father affirmed Jesus' responses as a child and a young man. Before He preached one message, the Father was pleased with His 30 years of humility.

A voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mt. 3:17)

- G. One of the the greatest tragedies is to die and stand before Jesus with little or no history of faithfulness that expressed our obedient love to God. One of our greatest privileges and glories is to give our response of love and obedience expressed in persevering, devoted labor before Him.