

Pastor Little's Word for the Week

The Call to Persevere

Hebrews 12: 1-13

"...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." (vs.1)

Most worthwhile accomplishments are rarely accomplished with the first effort. Success comes only as a result of repeated efforts.

A health professional once told me that the greatest predictor of a smoker's ability to quit to smoking is this: they have tried and failed at least once before. Rarely do smokers successfully quit on the first try. Some try, fail, and never try again. Those who quit for a lifetime are those who have the determined persistence to try again, even when it didn't work out last time they tried.

The same can be said about any other area of self-improvement. Or any effort at holy living. People who create lasting change are those who have the courage to keep trying, failure after humiliating failure.

If you find yourself bound by bad habits, addictions, repeated failures and besetting sins, I want you to know that a life of victory is possible. It's not only possible, it's yours for the taking — if you are willing to persist.

So let us prayerfully consider how we can make persistence a permanent practice in our daily lives.

There are three things I want you to think about.

1. The WHY of persistence.

I once heard someone say, "If you have a big enough why, you will figure out the how."

There are many reasons people are motivated to do the things they do: money, power, and prestige among them. But let me suggest the greatest motivation of all— Persistence pleases God.

If your goal is a good thing — victory over sin, to be useful to God in some area of ministry, to be a good parent, and on and on — then you can be sure God wants you to be persistent in your pursuit of it.

This is why Solomon said...

For the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity. (Proverbs 24:16)

Trying again pleases God.

In today's text, the writer of Hebrews says...

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. (vss. 12-13)

He is saying: Keep Trying. Persist. It is what God wants for you.

2. The HOW of persistence.

There is a story in the gospel of John, after the resurrection of Jesus, when the apostles had spent the entire night fishing, but caught nothing. Jesus called out to them from the shore...

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. (John 21:6)

It was as though he was saying: Try again, but this time do it a little differently. The goal didn't change. The strategy didn't change. But they modified their method a little bit, and this time it worked.

Instead of giving up, ask yourself: What are some ways I could cast my net to the other side of the boat?

There is another how of persistence that must not be overlooked. That is: You keep seeking God in the process. You keep asking for his help.

Paul said...

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Philippians 4:13 KJV)

The key phrase is "through Christ." For this reason we need to call on him every day for strength and help: God, I will do my best, but I cannot do this without you.

3. The WHEN of persistence.

Quite simply, When is today.

Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

God wants you to persist through your difficulties, and he wants to begin today. And he wants you continue tomorrow.

Walter Elliot once said, "Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another."

One a day at a time. Persisting our way through setbacks and defeat, with the courage to try again. This is what makes us victorious.

For this reason, the writer of Hebrews says to us...

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."