

Persistence

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Successful Christian living requires a life of constancy or persistence. Turn to Mark chapter 4, verses 14-20. Why did the plant in the stony ground die? It had no root, no continuation, no endurance qualities. Jesus is indicating that this is a sad picture of many people who become Christians. When they're baptized they're filled with joy and happiness. They survive for a while. And then some fall away. They fail to learn a great lesson in life. Endurance. Persistence.

A person can have very good intentions. He can have high goals and desires. Though, without constancy or persistence, they're useless. Constancy is a must for successful Christian living. Notice Hebrews chapter three, chapter three, verse 14. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

There are good reasons for emphasizing persistence. If life were easy, persistence would be no problem. But life has its challenges. It has its problems. We have trials and tribulations. The apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 4. He was happy about their faith and patience and all the persecutions and tribulations that they had to endure. In addition to the life's normal tribulations, the Christian faces persecution as well. 2 Timothy chapter three, verse 12. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Last week, had Bible classes in Ketti up in Tamil Nadu, there was a preacher there who had suffered persecution. Several years ago, he went into a village to preach the gospel, some radical men grabbed him and beat him severely. He was in a coma for two months. He had his head all bandaged up, bandage on his face. Finally, he got well, and he continued to preach the gospel. We need to have that kind of persistence. That's the way the Apostle Paul suffered. If we live a faithful Christian life, one time or another, we will face persecution of some sort. Now these things challenge and test our faith in Christ. Will we give into doubt? Will we let discouragement cause us to fall away? Will we allow the easy way to turn us away from the way that straight and narrow? We must emphasize persistence.

Some of the states here in India have passed an anti-conversion law. So should we stop preaching Christ, trying to convert people to Christ? Do you remember the apostles in Acts chapter five were told, "Stop preaching the gospel." But they said, "We must obey God rather than man." As Christians, we must be lawful people. But if man's law is against God's law, who do we obey? So to survive, constancy must be the word we live by. No one will survive without constancy, persistence. Its value is well illustrated in our world.

A man named Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. When he was trying to invent the light bulb, he failed hundreds of times. But he kept working, kept working. And finally he succeeded in inventing the light bulb. He observed that achievement is 2% inspiration, and 98% perspiration. And so by that he meant we had to just keep working and working and working until we achieve our goal.

One of the presidents of the United States in the 19th century was Abraham Lincoln. And his life well illustrates this principle of persistence. In 1831, he failed in business. In 1832, he was defeated for the legislature. In 1833, he failed again in business. In 1834, He was elected to the legislature. In 1838, he was defeated for Speaker of the House. In 1840, he was defeated for another office. In 1843, he was defeated for Congress. In 1846, he was elected to Congress. In 1848, he was defeated for Congress. In 1855, he was defeated for the Senate. In 1856, he was defeated for Vice President. In 1858, he was defeated for the Senate. In 1860, he was elected President of the United States. He suffered many defeats, but he never quit; he never gave up. He was persistent. And like Abraham Lincoln, we can succeed if we are persistent.

We can also learn from every disappointment and difficulty. As we saw in James chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. All of our trials can work patience, patience will help us to be persistent. Constancy is our way of proving that we want to succeed. We're called to be faithful for life. Absolutely nothing will take the place of persistence. A talent will not take the place of persistence. Talented people have failed. Genius will not take the place of persistence. People of genius have failed. Education will not take the place of persistence. Educated people have failed. Wherever we are in life we must be persistent to succeed.

Let's think about the blessings of constancy. Persistence will reward us greatly. It'll bring us peace because we're living faithfully to God every day. It will bring a sense of joy of achievement. It will give continual meaning and purpose for our lives. It will produce an amazing knowledge of the Word of God. If we faithfully study the Word of God every day, our knowledge will increase.

We read in Psalm 119, verse 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my pathway." So, we must faithfully study the Bible all of our lives. A persistence will make us wiser from our experiences in the light of God's Word. And it will bring us many opportunities to affect the lives of other people for good. Just imagine a life that's devoted to the things I'm going to tell you here. I will never give up as long as I know what I'm doing is right. I'll believe that all things will work out for me if I hang on to the end.

Have you ever had the experience of something bad happening to you, and then a few years later, you see how all of that worked for your good? At the time, it seemed like a tragedy. But out of that tragedy, God has brought good things through your life. I will be just be courageous and undismayed in the face of tremendous odds. I will not permit anyone to intimidate me or to deter me from my goal. I will fight to overcome all physical handicaps and setbacks. I will try again and again and again to do what's right. I will learn from others who have successfully overcome adversity. I'll never surrender to discouragement or despair, no matter what obstacles I may confront. If we can live like that we will be living a life of persistence.

A woman went to a concert by a great pianist. And the woman said to the piano player, "I'd give anything if I could play like you do." And the pianist answer was, "No, you wouldn't." The lady said, "Yes, but I really would like to play like you do." And the pianist said, "If you really do then you will

have to give time to practice hour after hour, day after day, year after year.” To succeed in doing anything, we have to be persistent. We can do many things in life if we're willing to pay the price. And that price is persistence.

The Romans came to Great Britain. They came to the cliffs of Dover, and they came there to conquer. But, they were defeated. They were repulsed. They left. But then later they returned. And this time they came to stay. They landed their boats. They carried their supplies to the shore. And then they set their boats on fire. They had no way to leave if they even wanted to. And so with great resolution, they went into battle. And they won. Because they were persistent. They did not let one defeat deter them from their goal. On the road to heaven, we must burn our bridges. Remember that Jesus warns us about looking back. If we look back we're not worthy of Him. So we must resolve to be persistent as Christians.