CHARACTERISTIC FIVE: PERSEVERANCE

Lesson 12: Keep Going When You Want to Quit

2 Peter 1:6 "…to self-control, perseverance…"

Have you ever felt like all of hell was against you? When it seems like one thing after another seems to keep going wrong? In our last lesson we talked about taking up our cross daily to follow Jesus and to do so we had to add the characteristic of perseverance to our lives. In this lesson, we will continue that theme but focus on how to keep going even when we feel like giving up.

I believe perseverance in the life of a believer, regardless of one's calling, must first have the goal of patterning our lives after Christ's and to live according to the Word of God. In 2 Peter, Peter is addressing a network of churches that have been under constant attack to leave their faith in a culture that was completely at odds with their Christian Principles. There were false teachers that were denying Christ, twisting the teachings of Paul's "freedom in Christ" message to mean "anything goes" morally or sexually and even that there would be no judgement for doing such things. Peter is combatting this false teaching and encouraging his fellow believers to persevere amid this corrupt society.

We can see this same atmosphere in our present time. Even some that call themselves pastors, which when you judge their fruit are false prophets, are denying the power of Christ & preaching a false doctrine of inclusivity without change. The world and these false teachers are constantly bombing the airwaves and social media with their doctrine, and they criticize and slander any God-fearing Christian who opposes them. We may have better developed civil infrastructures, newer advancements in medicine and more innovative technologies, but spiritually, socially and morally we live in a time much like Peter was addressing. We all need encouragement to persevere and to stay faithful to the true Gospel of Jesus, even when we feel like quitting.

This is where the power of the Holy Spirit comes in. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."[1] This word "power" that Jesus uses here is the Greek word dynamis (δύναμις), which means power, might, ability, and strength. In other words, Jesus is saying that when we receive the Holy Spirit that we will have all the power that dwelt in Him. The same power, the same might, the same ability and the same strength. The Apostle Paul speaks of this in Romans 8:11 when he says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to

your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."[2] Put another way, even if a situation looks dead in your life, He can reinvigorate it by the power of His Spirit that is in you.

It's this power that gives us the ability to keep going in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances or even after considerable failings or setbacks. Believe me, on the road to fulfilling your God-given purpose you will face roadblocks. A person that perseveres is one that doesn't allow the roadblocks to stop them, by the power of the Spirit they find a way around them. I used to have a motivational picture in my office which read:

"He failed in business in '31.
He was defeated for state legislator in '32.
He tried another business in '33. It failed.
His fiancée died in '35.
He had a nervous breakdown in '36.
In '43 he ran for congress and was defeated.
He tried again in '48 and was defeated again.
He tried running for the Senate in '55. He lost.
The next year he ran for Vice President and lost.
In '59 he ran for the Senate again and was defeated. In 1860, the man who signed his name Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States.

The difference between history's boldest accomplishments, and its most staggering failures is often, simply, the diligent will to persevere."

Remember, all of us face challenges and setbacks in life, some more than others, but no one is immune. Many times, we feel like giving up, but regardless of the obstacles that you're facing today, I want to encourage you to persevere– bathe your plans in prayer and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and He will give you the power, might, ability and strength to overcome.

Lesson 12 Questions

1. In what ways are we facing the same pressures as those Peter is addressing in 2 Peter?

2. How are we able to persevere and overcome?

3. Jesus said that we would have “power” after we receive the Holy Spirit, in what ways does God use this power in our lives?

[1] *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ac 1:8. (NKJV).

[2] Ro 8:11. (NKJV).