



Perseverance – The Key

It is fair to say that anything truly worthwhile that we do in life takes hard work and ongoing perseverance. Whether learning to play an instrument or developing a new skill. Whether taking up a new sport or committing ourselves to the discipline of an academic course. There are times, things get difficult and we feel like giving up. The same is true for the faith that we have in Jesus. Paul speaks of the Christian faith in terms of a race that has to be run and run to completion. What is said by Paul is that it is not how you start the race that is important, but that you run the race till it is completed. A true Christian is one who does not give up when things are tough but learns to persevere and overcome through Christ who strengthens us. True perseverance is a mark of saving faith!!

Discuss - (In group / or small groups)

- Q1) Why do you think we often want to give up when things get difficult?
- Q2) How do you respond / or will respond- when you go through difficult times in your faith?
- Q3) How do you think we can find help – and help each other when the tough times come?

Truth 1 - Perseverance through hardship produces real Christian character!!

The heart and desire of God for your life and mine is that we are deepened in the salvation that we have in His Son. This salvation is based on a living hope that this life and even death itself is not the end but a wonderful new beginning for those who have put their trust in Jesus. Throughout the history of the church, Christians have been persecuted for their faith. What you find often happens is that they will even die before they will renounce their faith in Jesus. Many of the martyrs of the Christian faith actually sang songs of praise as they were tortured, or even put to death. The reason for this is that the hardships that they were enduring, stripped away the false sense of security that this world has to offer and enabled them to truly see and put their full hope and confidence in Jesus and the eternal life He promises. Often it is in times of hardship that trust in the comforts of this world is shaken and we refocus our lives on the one true foundation which is Christ. In every sense suffering produces Christian effort and perseverance – which in turn produces a greater Christian character built upon the hope and promises of Jesus... Hardship is an opportunity to grow in faith **IF** we persevere!! Romans 5 v 1 – 5

Truth 2 – To truly persevere we NEED to keep our focus on Jesus.

In Matthew 14 v 22 – 31 we see how in the midst of strong winds and large waves Jesus walks on water from the shore to the boat where His disciples are. When Peter sees Him, he asks Jesus to allow Him to walk on the water to. This is what Peter does, he steps out of the boat, keeps his focus on Jesus and walks towards Him on the water. As the wind blows and the waves get bigger Peter takes His eyes off Jesus and as a result becomes terrified of the situation he has put himself in, and he begins to sink. The same is true for us, as it is for Peter. When we go through the storms of life, it is important that we keep our focus and trust on Jesus. As the waves of adversity come against us and as we keep our focus on Jesus we find that He is truly the one who calms the storms in our lives and enables us to rise, not sink in the face of personal or family hardship. However if we take our eyes off Him, we soon lose hope as the waves of adversity seem to get out of control and we lose faith in Jesus' ability to help us. This is when we become self pitied and begin to question the Lord's ways and provision. We have a race that has been laid out for us. At the finish line stands Jesus!! We need to keep our focus on Him, so that whatever tries to distract us we know our Saviour can and will see us through to the end!! Hebrews 12 v 1 – 2

Matthew 14 v 22 – 31

Truth 3 – Do not grumble – persevere – for the day of judgement will soon be here

Scripture is clear that the Lord rewards those of His people who do not give up. We are encouraged by God's Word to fix our hearts and minds on the prize that is ours through Christ Jesus. It is a simple yet important truth:- that we suffer for a little while yet the reward we will have in Christ lasts for eternity. The simple truth is that from the very hands of Christ Himself we will receive the crown of life, we will be given the victor's wreath if we finish the race. The day of judgement is not far off. At that time we will

stand before the throne of Christ and He will judge to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Scripture says in the parable of the sower that some start well and quickly grow up with enthusiasm and passion, yet their roots are shallow and weak and when the pressures of the world come against them they will shrivel up and die. A lot of what perseverance is about is focus. It is about keeping our focus on Jesus. It is about focusing on the truth that this life we live is but a short and temporary affair. It is gone in the blink of an eye, but the hope, the security, the promises we have in Christ last forever. He who has started the work in you will carry it on till it is completed. For He has enriched you with every Spiritual blessing in Christ – So Persevere!!

James 5 v 7 – 12 _____

Ephesians 1 v 3 – 4 _____

Philippians 1 v 6 _____

