

Daily God Walk
Virtues Series

Perseverance



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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

(NIV) – New International Version

Other Reference works:

(Thayer's) – Thayer's Greek English Lexicon Of The New Testament

(Vine's) – Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

(GTV) – God's Treasury of Virtues

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Daily God Walk Resources

There are four series of Daily God Walk devotionals. There is one year of devotions on Promises, one year on Virtues of the Spirit, one year on The Life of Christ and one year on The Christ Life.

Each series has 12 monthly devotionals. You will be blessed by each one. Our focus has been on providing a tool to enhance the believers faith walk. Many of the devotions have a challenge to go deeper in your faith, and some of them are presenting a theme of thankfulness and rejoicing.

You can find more information at www.dailygodwalk.org At that site you will also find information on how to use the Daily God Walk as a resource for small group meetings.

We also offer other resources:

God Walk – A Journey of Faith; a book teaching how to overcome undesirable behaviors

Hope and Promises From God’s Word; This book contains about 100 Scripture based confessions of faith with the verses being confessed. It also has a section of promises on various subjects.

Invitation to a New Life; in this book we answer “What is repentance.” And we go on to discuss baptism, followed by a section on the working of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

Tough Times Produce Tough People; In the beginning of our ministry we went through some really tough times and this book describes how we made it through. It is set in the story of how King Hezekiah responded to being under siege by the Assyrian army.

Explore all of our resources at www.dailygodwalk.org

Day One

Add Perseverance To Your Faith

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control; perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

- 2 Peter 1:5-7

Throughout these months in our times of devotion together we have looked at various virtues, or fruit of the Spirit. This virtue that we are exploring is the glue that holds the others together. This month we are looking at perseverance.

Perseverance is similar in meaning to patience, in fact the same Greek word is translated variously patience and perseverance in the New Testament. When we look closely there is a subtle difference however. Patience may carry the connotation of setting quietly waiting for something to happen, but perseverance carries the connotation of having to endure some unpleasant situation in order to accomplish an objective.

I find perseverance in the parable of the seed and the sower recorded in Matthew 13. In this story there are four types of soil. There is seed on the path which was eaten by the birds. Then seed that fell in rocky soil which could not endure the elements. The third seed fell among the weeds and was choked out.

It is the fourth seed that addresses the concept of perseverance. This seed endured the same conditions as the others. It endured the wind, the rain, and the sun to become a fruitful plant. Though the elements were not easy to endure they were necessary to drive the roots of the plant deep into the soil so it could gain nourishment which would give it strength to endure the elements. That sounds like a cycle doesn't it? It is very similar to our faith.

Can you see the point? Our faith needs trials to perfect it and to endure the trials we need perseverance to endure the challenge of growth. When we have endured and our faith has grown we are again challenged to endure hardship that we may become stronger.

Prayer: Lord, enduring trials is not easy, but I know that my walk is made strong as I add perseverance to my faith. Grant me the grace to persevere. Amen.

Message: Our faith needs trials to perfect it and to endure the trials we need perseverance to endure the challenge of growth. Faith is a never ending cycle of perseverance.

Affirmation: I can endure all things through faith because I know that perseverance produces stronger faith.

Reflection: Give some thought to how enduring the difficulties of life grows our faith.

Day Two

Persevere In The Face Of Evil

My dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. - 1 Corinthians 15:58

This appeal by Paul to the church at Corinth doesn't give the full story. We all should hear Paul's encouragement and stand firm not letting anything move us. But to the Corinthian believers it is particularly important.

Corinth was a center for Aphrodite worship and the temple had 1000 prostitutes consecrated to the worship of Aphrodite. It was very much a center for pleasure and people came from long distances to indulge her debaucheries.

It was in this setting that Paul addresses a young church filled with believers whose only cultural identity was that of the evil of that city. The people were ruled by their desire for self-fulfillment and pleasure.

Paul introduced them to an entirely new concept. True fulfillment comes through knowing the Christ who brings reconciliation to God. Many of the inhabitants of Corinth, whose souls had been bankrupted by the pursuit of fleshly pleasure, were ready to hear of a Christ who could bring peace and fullness to their emptiness. In this context Paul calls

the church to stand firm and not be moved by the sin around them.

It is not hard to derive a parallel with our society today and the society of Corinth in Paul's time. Pleasure is god and self-fulfillment is the objective. The gospel of hedonism is preached in every advertisement and people are influenced to follow empty promises by the millions.

In the face of this age of sensuality where personal pleasure is the greatest motivator we who are the body of the Christ are being called to stand firm. We cannot be moved by the sin around us. We must give ourselves to the work of the Lord because we know that regardless of what the world promises it only delivers disappointment and emptiness.

Prayer: Lord, I still live in this house of flesh and there are times when its pull is strong. Grant me your strength to persevere. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: In the face of this age of sensuality where personal pleasure is the greatest motivator we who are the body of the Christ are being called to stand firm in the faith and persevere in the face of evil.

Affirmation: I am standing firm in my faith because I know that what the world is offering only God can give.

Reflection: Think about some steps you can take to take a firm stand in your faith and to persevere in this age which offers pleasure as its god.

Day Three

Persevere In The Freedom Of God's Grace

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. – Galatians 5:1

One of the challenges I have faced is resisting my performance based belief system in my faith walk. Like most men I am geared to perform and find my identity in what I have achieved. The problem with this is that it bleeds over into my faith-life.

I don't think I am the only one who struggles with this issue. In fact, over the years many have come for counsel because of depression and feelings of inadequacy – and both of those conditions are often the result of a performance based belief.

The problem Paul was addressing with this church is that the Jewish believers were trying to bring them under the law. This Gentile church had not been raised in Judaism and they did not have a performance based belief system. They readily accepted the grace of God through faith in Christ, but the Jewish believers who were still trying to hold to the Law of Moses were trying to convince the church at Galatia to accept the law.

Paul was reminding them that Christ had set them free to serve God in faith, willingly, and not under constraint. The freedom that Christ gave was indeed that – freedom from the law of sin and death. To submit to the Law would subject them to the same failures that the Jews faced.

My personal battle with a performance based faith was won at a time when I was studying a course in evangelism. One part of the course explained what Jesus meant when he cried out from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). A meaning of the word translated “finished” is the discharge of a debt.

Suddenly my head realized what my heart had hoped for; I didn’t owe any debt because my debt was discharged at Calvary. I didn’t have to become worthy and I didn’t have to prove myself to him. He had proved himself to me by paying my debt. I persevered in faith and now I am indeed free.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving me the understanding that it is by grace I have been set free. Grant me the grace to continue in this freedom. Amen.

Message: We don’t have to become worthy and we don’t have to prove ourselves to him. He has proved himself to us by paying our debt. We must persevere in faith realizing we are indeed free.

Affirmation: I no longer owe a debt for my sins, Christ has paid that debt for me. The only debt I now have is the debt of love to God and others.

Reflection: It would be good to ask yourself if your faith is performance based or grace based. Do you serve to be approved, or do you serve because you are approved?

Day Four

Persevering In The Faith

Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith. - Philippians 1:27

How do we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? That question becomes particularly pertinent in the light of salvation and right relationship with God by grace through faith alone. In Ephesians Paul tells us that it is the grace of God alone and not of any works that man can do that releases salvation to us (2:8).

If Paul is not talking about performance, or works, what is he talking about? In reading this book it seems that Paul was preoccupied with suffering and death. In chapter one he writes of life and death and the consequence of either. In chapter two he talks about suffering, particularly the suffering of Christ. In chapter three he talks about his own desire to be “Worthy of the fellowship of sharing in his suffering.”

It is in this context that he calls the church at Philippi to be worthy of the gospel of Christ. He speaks of “standing firm,” and “contending for the faith.” These terms indicate that faith in Christ is free but it does not come cheap. There is a personal commitment required to walk in the grace that God has afforded those who would believe.

To be worthy of the gospel we must be willing to stand in the face of opposition and endure persecution to the point of ultimate sacrifice. To be worthy of the gospel is to say with Paul, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

To be worthy of the gospel we must be committed to persevere in every circumstance. We must agree with Paul, “I know what it is to be in need, and what it is to have plenty I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12-13).

Prayer: Lord, this life has a strong attraction to me. I am often conflicted with a desire for you and the world. Help me to worthy of you. Amen.

Message: Faith in Christ is free but it does not come cheap. There is a personal commitment required to walk in the grace that God has afforded those who would believe. We must have persevering faith.

Affirmation: I realize the value of God's grace and the sacrifices I must make to continue in faith. I have persevering faith.

Reflection: The faith of Apostle Paul gave him the grace to endure the hardships of serving God in an antagonistic environment. Reflect on how your faith enables you to endure.

Day Five

A Persevering Faith Meets A Roaring Lion

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. – 1 Peter 5:8-9

We have read of the persecution endured by early believers. From the first persecution in Jerusalem, which followed the martyrdom of Stephen, to killing of the apostles and beyond, the church endured much persecution. From beatings to being thrown to the lions Christians knew persecution.

The persecution did not stop with the early Christians, it continues today. The following is an excerpt from the web site “opendoorsusa.org”:

100 million Christians around the globe are currently suffering persecution for their faith. Most often persecution takes the form of imprisonment, abuse, and hostilities. In some cases, however, Christians are asked to face more than scorn, prison, or the loss of health—they are asked to face death.

Peter is not only warning people to be aware of the one who snares us, he is also warning us to be mindful of other believers who are being persecuted and even giving their life for the gospel. God is calling people to awaken from their stupor of mediocrity and treasure the prize we possess.

The roaring lion has gotten wise. Rather than a frightening roar he uses a seductive appeal. He appeals to our base nature which cries for self-fulfillment and the comfort afforded by prosperity. This evil one has won the hearts of many believers who do not see the cause for standing firm in the faith.

The gospel some preach glosses over the mandate of Jesus, "If a person is to be my disciple he must deny himself." Tradition tells us that Peter, who wrote today's verse, was crucified for the faith. Should our commitment be any less?

Ask yourself this question: "Do I stand as strong for the gospel as those who are dying for the gospel around the world?"

Prayer: Lord, Health, wealth and prosperity is just as attractive to me as it is to others. Help me to pursue you rather than those things. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The roaring lion has gotten wise. Rather than a frightening roar he uses a seductive appeal. He appeals to our base nature which cries for self-fulfillment and the comfort afforded by prosperity.

Affirmation: I can resist the seductive appeal of the enemy because I am aware of his seduction. I deny myself daily and take up the cross of faith daily.

Reflection: The roar of the lion today is more of an appeal to our base nature than a chilling threat. Give some thought to how this enemy of our soul appeals to your base nature.

Day Six

Hope Enables Us To Persevere

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

- Romans 5:2-4

I saw a placard once that said, "I was a hopeless dope fiend, now I am a dopeless hope fiend." The person who had put that placard on their door had come to know Jesus as the Christ of redemption. He was hopeless in his addiction, but in Christ he found hope.

It was the same for all of us in this world and without Christ; we had no lasting hope. Then someone introduced us to Christ and hope was born in our hearts. That faith driven hope enabled us to surrender our life to the one who is himself life. This hope is what gives us an anchor in life's storms.

This hope gives us eyes to see beyond the storm to the glory God has prepared for us. Our hope in Christ does not keep us from suffering but it does enable us to persevere in our suffering.

Another passage in Romans encourages us, "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (15:4). It is the very nature of hope to give us the impetus to take the next step even in the face of great adversity.

I remember shortly after the Vietnam war many stories of heroic survival emerged as the prisoners of war were released. There were reports from believers who survived torture for years because of their faith. There was one story, and I can't remember the details, not even the name of the people involved, but the POW's developed a system of quoting scripture to each other by using a code they tapped out on the walls.

Hope drives us further than we could possibly go on our own. Hope calls to those who have fallen and says, "Get up, there will be another day." Hope stands at the bedside of a dying loved one and says, "I'll see you over there." Hope gives us perseverance.

Prayer: Father, give the hopeless eyes to see what they can be in you. Amen.

Message: Hope gives us eyes to see beyond the storm to the glory God has prepared for us. Our hope in Christ does not keep us from suffering but it does enable us to persevere in our suffering.

Affirmation: I know that in this world I will have disappointments and times of suffering, but I also know that God's grace is sufficient to enable to persevere, even in suffering.

Reflection: Hope gives us the strength to endure. Give some thought to the tough times you have endured and remember the grace God gave you to persevere.

Day Seven

Perseverance Produces A Rich Reward

Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. – Hebrews 10:35

There is not another story in Scripture that better demonstrates persevering in the most difficult of circumstances than the story of Job. A man of means and respected as a leader in the community one day and the next day all of his animals gone, his children killed in a freak storm, and his servants are scattered or killed by an enemy. Yet he would not blame God.

Just a short time later his body was covered with sores from head to foot and his wife chided him, “Just curse God and die.” Job responded, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

Most of the book of Job consists of his friends arguing with him that he had done some evil thing for God to do this to him. Job’s retort was “I have not sinned and I don’t know what this is all about, but I do know this – even if God slays me I will continue to trust him.”

Those whose faith is based in circumstances do not have hope, they just have a wishful thought. Far too many who are claiming faith in Christ have come along for the good times, but “lose faith” when things get rough.

There is no cure for hard times except to endure, and there is no hope in surrendering our faith in the challenges of life. If you are discouraged remember these words: If it is this bad with Christ, imagine what it would be without him.

I have a friend who had received bad news about getting custody of her children. She was discouraged and said, "What's the use. I'm going to contact my drug connection and get high." My answer to that was, "How is that going to get your children back?" She heard the challenge and continued in faith. She got her children back and now she is doing well. I say to you; "Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded."

Prayer: Lord, help me in times of discouragement to hold on. Grant me the grace to persevere and gain the reward. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Those whose faith is based in circumstances do not have hope, they just have a wishful thought. There is no cure for hard times except to endure, and there is no hope in surrendering our faith in the challenges of life.

Affirmation: I am committed for the long term; circumstances do not affect my hope. I can endure hard times and persevere because my faith is secure in Him.

Reflection: Hope is an anchor for our soul (Hebrews 6:19), and it is because of hope that we endure the hardships life brings our way. Reflect on how you respond to hard times and whether your response is from hope.

Day Eight

Do Not Fail To Persevere

The man of God answered the king, “Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. For I was commanded by the word of the Lord: “You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.” – 1 Kings 13:8-9

This verse is a short excerpt from an odd story. Jeroboam, the king of Israel was worshipping at the altar he had erected to compete with the altar at the Temple in Jerusalem. God sent a prophet to speak against worship at that altar.

The prophet declared that God would split the altar and its ashes would fall out on the ground. King Jeroboam was angered at the prophecy and ordered the prophet seized. When he stretched out his hand to give the order his arm shriveled up so that he could not move it and just at that time the altar split as the prophet had predicted.

The king repented, his arm was healed and he invited the prophet to his palace to eat and be refreshed. The prophet responded God had commanded him to make the prophecy and not to tarry but to return to Judah without eating or drinking and take another path home. So he left by another path.

Then along the way another older prophet deceived him into coming to his house saying, “The Lord told me to bring you home and feed you.”

When he had finished eating he continued home and was met by a lion that killed him. That was an odd thing to happen for such a minor infraction.

This prophet lost his life because he failed to obey the command of God. He thought he was safe with the older prophet. After all, the prophet told him that God had given him the instruction. How often have we felt God had instructed us to do something then in the process of doing it we were given conflicting counsel from people we trusted? Remember: Well meaning people who do not know God's word for you can easily get you off track.

Prayer: Lord, I do not fully understand this story, but it does impress upon me the need to persevere in following you all the way. Help me to do that. Amen.

Message: Well meaning people who do not know God's word for you can easily get you off track - you must always persevere in obeying God.

Affirmation: Once I have heard the word of the Lord I close my mind to opposing ideas because God's word is true and he will give me the grace to endure if I continue in faith.

Reflection: It is difficult to persevere in claiming the word of the Lord when those you respect counsel you otherwise. Think of a time in your life when you knew what God had told you but others tried to discourage you from doing it.

Day Nine

Persevering Faith Produces A Victorious Life

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. ... He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David. - 2 kings 22:1-2

Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, was one of the most violent and profane kings of Judah. His father, Amon, was just as wicked and continued to lead the Jews into idolatry. Ascending to the throne at eight years of age, Josiah should have followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather - but he didn't.

How could an eight year old boy keep from being influenced by the sins of his father? The only answer can be that he was under the influence of another person. There was a strong person in his life that would transfer to him values and a belief system that convey the teachings of justice and righteousness.

Who was that person in Josiah's life? It could have been his mother. A mother has great influence in the life of an eight year old. His mothers' name was Jedidah. Her name means, "Friend of God." It is likely that this woman raised Josiah to know God.

Josiah broke the cycle of violence and unrighteousness established by the kings before him. When he was just 16, 2 Chronicles 34 records, "He began to seek the God of his father David." When he was 20 he began the spiritual restoration of Jerusalem by destroying the idols and places where they were

worshipped. Throughout his reign he led the nation back to God.

This young man had learned to walk with God. “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.” He did what was right and he was not distracted from his purpose. He persevered to change the face of his nation.

There are two stories to be told here. The story of a mother who was committed to training her son to be a friend of God. Then Josiah himself and his righteous acts. Both stories teach Perseverance in the faith produces a victorious life.

Prayer: Lord, It isn't always easy to stand against the evil of the day, but grant me the grace to persevere in preserving your ways.

Message: Every child needs someone who will mentor them in the ways of the Lord so that they can live out the kind of faith which produces a victorious life.

Affirmation: I am victorious in my faith walk because I have learned righteousness from my mentors as well as from the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God.

Reflection: There are two messages in this devotion. The first is that we all need a mentor - someone who will train us in the ways of the lord. The second is that we need to mentor those who are younger in the faith.

Day Ten

Will You Bow, Or Will You Stand?

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But, even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up. - Daniel 3:17-18

This is one of the great stories of victory in the Bible. These three young Hebrew princes, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, stood in the face of imminent danger and declared their faith in Jehovah.

We remember this story from our days in Sunday School. The king made a decree that everyone in the kingdom would bow before the golden image or suffer being thrown in the furnace. Three young men defied the king and vowed they would not bow.

They believed God would deliver them, but whether he did or didn't was not the issue. The issue was that they were not going to give homage to any deity except the Lord God. Their faith gave them the courage to persevere even under the threat of death.

I am concerned today that far too many believers have bought into the philosophy which teaches that truth is relative and what I believe may not agree with your truth, but that's OK because we each have our own truth.

Some today would not have felt obliged to resist the king because, after all, it's only a gesture, it

doesn't really tell who I am or what I really believe. On the contrary, it does tell who you are and what you believe. Bowing would reveal that you really don't believe Jehovah is the true God and that you are more concerned with offending the king than in standing up for your God.

Our faith is being challenged today. We may not be threatened with the furnace but we are being threatened in subtle ways. We are intimidated about sharing Christ in the marketplace and in schools. We are being asked to bow before the altar of humanism today - will you bow or will you stand?

Prayer: Lord, grant me the wisdom to discern the deceptions of humanistic thought and the strength to stand against it. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We are intimidated about sharing Christ in the marketplace and in schools. Our children are taught moral relativism and tolerance in a pluralistic society. We are being asked to bow before the altar of humanism today - will you bow or will you stand?

Affirmation: I will not bow before the altar of relativism, pluralism or humanism. I will stand in face of whatever opposes my faith because I know the God I serve.

Reflection: The way you face opposition and persecution defines your faith. How will your faith be defined?

Day Eleven

Will You Go With Him To Jerusalem?

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

- Luke 9:51

From the beginning of his life Jesus was pointed toward Jerusalem and the cross. Those who followed him did not understand what he was trying to teach them relative to his destiny, but he resolutely pressed toward the time and the place where he would become the final answer to man's sin-dilemma.

Just a few verses after this Luke records that Jesus and some of his disciples were walking along the road and a man approached them saying, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." We have no record of this man following Jesus, but Jesus walked resolutely toward his destiny.

Jesus called to another man, "Follow me." He was actually chosen of the master to be a disciple, but he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." This man was not committed to endure, but Jesus continued on his way to the cross.

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Many wanted to be casual followers, but they

didn't want to go where Jesus was going – and Jesus set his mind to continue on to Jerusalem and then to Calvary.

Jesus stands before the cross and calls to those passing by, “Will you come with me? Will you drink the cup I am drinking?” We may not be nailed to a cross as Christ was, but he is asking us to take up our own cross and follow him. All those who have chosen to give their life to him are being challenged to lay their life on the line.

Jesus made the challenge clear in Luke 14:26, “Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” There it is in plain language; to be his disciple you must bear the cross – are you his disciple? Will you follow him to Jerusalem?

Prayer: Lord, when I think of sacrifice and bearing the cross I am uncomfortable. Grant me grace to persevere. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: “Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” There it is in plain language; to be his disciple you must bear the cross – are you his disciple? Will you follow him to Jerusalem?

Affirmation: I am committed to following Jesus all the way to Jerusalem and the cross if that is what he calls me to do.

Reflection: Jesus had set his mind on Jerusalem even though he knew the price he would pay for going there. Give some thought to what you would be willing to do follow him.

Day Twelve

They Persevered In Speaking About Jesus

Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” – Acts 4:19-20

The test of our faith does not come when we agree with what we have heard – it comes when we are threatened for speaking what we have heard. The Jewish leaders did not care about the miracles, they were only interested in who was to receive the credit.

Peter and John were going to the temple to pray and noticed a lame man at the gate to the temple. They had no doubt seen him many times sitting there begging for alms. In fact, the entire city knew that he had sat in the same spot for decades. This day would change his life forever.

The disciples answered his appeal for money with this simple statement, “We don’t have any money, but what we do have we give to you freely, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” They reached out, took his hand and pulled him to his feet. He walked. He ran. In a very short time the news spread around the city and large crowds gathered to see him and hear Peter speak.

Thousands believed because of this miracle, but the test was coming. The rulers of the temple put Peter and John in prison for the night then the next day charged them to not teach or do any miracles in the name of Jesus. The challenge was before them and the question was, what would they do?

Many of us have been in similar situations. Oh, maybe it wasn't as severe as it was for Peter and John, but the test was there just the same. Someone found out we believe in Christ. Not only that, but they found out we believe there is only one way to God and that is through Jesus, the Christ. They are laughing and making fun of us. What are we going to do?

Facing stiff repercussions did the only thing they could do: They prayed. The key to persevering in the time of trouble is to pray until the Holy Spirit manifests himself in power (v31).

Prayer: Lord, I don't know what I would do if I were physically threatened for the gospel so give me grace and power to persevere. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Facing stiff repercussions if they continued to talk about Jesus the disciples did the only thing they could do: they prayed. The key to persevering in the time of trouble is to pray until the Holy Spirit manifests himself in power (v31).

Affirmation: I know there will be times of trouble and persecution so I pray until I sense my mind and heart are in union with Holy Spirit, then I speak his word boldly.

Reflection: Faced with being beaten, put in prison and possibly executed, the disciples were faced with a dilemma; will we continue to preach Jesus, or will we give in. Give some thought and prayer to what you would do.

Day Thirteen

Continuing In Faith Knowing Trials Are Ahead

In every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

- Acts 20:24

Paul's missionary journeys are winding down. He had been to Asia Minor, Arabia, and throughout all the lands of that region. Everywhere he went there was either a revival or a riot, or both. Now he is being drawn to Jerusalem for the last time. He has purposed to go even though the Holy Spirit has revealed what awaits him there.

What compels a person to continue walking into the face of danger knowing that their life could be ended in a moment of violence? In the case of Paul his motivation was the call of God on his life. He considered his life as nothing in comparison to the glory that awaited him (Romans 8:18). His goal was to "finish the race and complete the task."

Many have been introduced to the blessing aspect of the faith, but they have not been warned that there is a testing aspect to faith as well. In the time of Jesus there were many who followed him for the loaves and fishes, but in the end they were in the crowd calling out, "Crucify him, crucify him."

We have all known those who have struggled with their faith and have not been able to separate from

past influences and behaviors. Our heart has been grieved as we have seen them slip away not being able to hold on to their faith in Christ. They have become casualties of an unsure faith.

If we are to succeed in our faith walk we are going to have to be prepared to face challenges to our faith. We know that in this world we will have trouble, but we must be strong because Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). Not only Christ, but we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses to the faithfulness of God to bring us through - therefore, let us lay aside everything and everyone who hinders our walk (Hebrews 12:1). A persevering faith is one that is firmly founded on Christ alone.

Prayer: Grant me the grace to lay aside every hindrance to my faith. Amen.

Message: Persecution will separate those who are along for the blessings from those who have committed to follow whatever the cost.

Affirmation: I will continue to be willing to do whatever it takes to complete the task He has given me so that when I am finished I can say, "I have finished the race."

Reflection: How often are hesitant to take a stand out of fear of rejection by our peers and justify our position by saying to ourselves, "They won't listen anyway." Ask yourself, "When was the last time I took the risk and spoke out for Jesus?" Think about your destiny and how you must follow him.

Day Fourteen

The Value Of Family Relationships

Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Y our people will be my people and your God my God. - Ruth 1:16

Tragedy had struck Naomi. Famine had struck and her family had fled to Moab to survive. In time her sons grew and married, then tragedy struck. First her husband died then her sons died. Now, widowed, in a foreign land with two daughters-in-law, she is in despair.

Naomi decides to leave Moab and go home. She is trying to send her daughters-in-law back to their old home, but Ruth will not go. That is the setting of our Scripture passage today.

When Naomi told Ruth to go back to her people her reply to Naomi was the inspiration for a song that is sometimes sung by a bride to her bridegroom, “Whether Thou Goest.” Ruth was not speaking to her groom, she was speaking to the mother of her deceased husband. However, the principle was the same; she had made a commitment to her husband that now carried to her mother-in-law.

It is hard to get the story of Ruth condensed to a few words, but the message which comes out of the story is the value of loyalty and perseverance in the face of adversity. Ruth was loyal to the family she had committed herself to. She was not only committed to Naomi, all that was left of the family, but she was also committed to Naomi’s God.

When we are tempted to give up on relationships in trying times we should remember the story of Ruth. We not only learn the value of loyalty, and commitment, but we learn the reward of perseverance.

The end of the story is that Ruth married a wealthy farmer, a relative of her deceased husband, and had a son whose name was Obed. Obed had a son whose name was Jesse. Jesse had a son whose name was David. Because of her perseverance Ruth is mentioned as being in the lineage of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, it is a temptation to give up on relationships when we are required to step out of our+ comfort zone. Grant me the grace of Perseverance. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we are tempted to give up on relationships in trying times we should remember the story of Ruth. We not only learn the value of loyalty, and commitment, but we learn the reward of perseverance. Loyalty, commitment and perseverance produce rewards.

Affirmation: I am loyal to Christ, his word, his kingdom family and friends. And I am committed to persevering in my relationship with him and others.

Reflection: Why do you think Ruth was so loyal to Naomi? Read the whole story of Ruth and reflect on how she and her lineage was rewarded for her loyalty.

Day Fifteen

Enduring Friendship Requires Mutual Respect

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself...And Jonathan made a covenant with David.
- 1 Samuel 18:1-4

The friendship of Jonathan and David is one the great stories in the Bible. Two young men, one was the son of a king the other would someday become king. Jonathon, the son of Saul, the king, and David, the son of Jesse, the shepherd. Men of differing status, but who had become as one in spirit.

If you know the story you know how Saul sought to kill David, and had even ordered Jonathan to kill him, but Jonathan was true to the covenant he made with David. Every time his father would devise another plan to kill David, Jonathan would warn him. Even though they were separated by time and circumstance they persevered in preserving their friendship.

We all need friends like that. Friends who will put their own ambition on the shelf and help us work through our difficult times. It is also just as important, and probably even more so, for us to be that kind of a friend.

I have friends who were homeless. Actually, I met them when they were homeless and we invited them to come live with us for a while until they could get on their feet. While they were living with us they

recommitted their life to Christ and began to grow in spiritual maturity.

They have been living in their own place for some time now and don't need our friendship to survive. However, our friendship never was based on need but rather mutual respect and the Holy Spirit knitting our hearts together.

My friend has planted and maintained a garden for us. He mows our yard and has planted flowers. If we leave town for a few days, when we return, she has cleaned our house and washed our clothes. The fact that my friends are from a different race has never been a factor in our friendship. Their friendship is a treasure I will cherish my entire life.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to be the kind of friend I want to have. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Friends who will put their own ambition on the shelf and help us work through our difficult times are of great value. We must have that kind of commitment to friendship to those who call us friend.

Affirmation: I am loyal to Christ and to those who call me friend.

Reflection: The cost of friendship can be great, but the rewards of being a friend and having a friend are greater. Think about the price Jonathon paid to be a friend to David. He was in line to follow his father as king, yet, he knew David had been anointed by God to be king and still he was loyal to David. Do you think you could do that?

Day Sixteen

Elisha Pursued His Goal Resolutely

Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel.” – 2 Kings 2:2

Elijah was one of the most renowned prophets in Israel’s history and Elisha was his protégé. Elisha wanted to carry on the ministry of Elijah and he knew that he would have to stay close to him to learn all that he could. He also knew that the Lord was going to take Elijah soon, and Elisha wanted to be there to receive Elijah’s mantle of anointing.

Three times Elijah tried to send Elisha away, but Elisha would hear nothing of it. He knew that the thing he wanted most would be given him only if he stayed close to Elijah. As they were walking they came to the Jordan. Elijah took off his coat and struck the water. The water divided and they crossed over on dry ground.

“When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me what can I do for you before I am taken from you?’ ‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,’ Elisha replied. ‘You have asked a difficult thing,’ Elijah said, ‘yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours – otherwise not’ (v9-11).

Elisha had been mentored by Elijah to be the next prophet in the land. One thing he had learned is that to be mentored by another person one must pursue the mentor with a passion. If Elisha had not had a firm resolve to be with Elijah when he was

taken up he might have left when Elijah told him to go – but he didn't because he was committed to getting the blessing.

We have all known people who were impressed by someone else and wanted to be mentored by them, but they lacked the tenacity to pursue their mentor. Usually a person worth emulating is a busy person and busy people require a lot of tenacity to get close to them. Elisha had that kind of perseverance in his pursuit of Elijah. Perseverance in pursuit of a goal has great rewards.

Is there someone you have desired to emulate? Pursue them.

Prayer: Lord, I do desire your best for me, but it is easy to become sidetracked; grant me the grace to stay focused on you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Perseverance in pursuit of a goal has great rewards. Elisha would not have received the blessing had he not persevered in pursuing Elijah.

Affirmation: I am committed to pursuing God and his blessing in the manner in which Elisha pursued the blessing from Elijah.

Reflection: When God has promised a blessing we often have to endure undesirable circumstances in pursuit of that blessing. We must resolve to do whatever it takes to receive the blessing that we have been promised.

Day Seventeen

Committed To Serving Him

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. - Matthew 27:56

It was the saddest day in the lives of those who followed Jesus. He had endured a sham of a trial, brutal beatings, then the cross. The crowds had deserted him and his disciples were nowhere to be seen. All that is recorded is that there were a few women who stood at a distance and watched.

There was Mary Magdalene, the woman who many believe was delivered from demons and freed from prostitution. There was also Mary the mother of James and Joses and thought also to be the mother of Jesus. Then there was the unnamed mother of the "sons of Zebedee." This mother had hoped that the Christ would have a special place for her sons.

All of those who stood watching from a distance had a vested interest in the one who had just died on the cross. It was this connection of concern that drew them to risk their own safety to care for the needs of Jesus..

Some have commented about the fact that they watched from a distance and have left the impression that these women were less than fully committed.

The point is that they did follow him and that they were there to minister to his needs on that day.

The message I see in this vignette is that these women were willing to serve the one who had so greatly impacted their life. These are the ones who went to the grave early on the morning of resurrection to prepare the body of Jesus for its final interment and they are the ones who found the empty tomb. It was their commitment to Jesus that led them to discover the resurrection.

Their commitment to the Christ took them to their greatest sorrow and ultimately to their greatest joy. We all need that kind of commitment.

Prayer: Lord, you gave so much and I give so little. Grant me the grace to commitment my life fully to serving your kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: It was this connection of concern that drew the women to Jesus on the cross. They risked their own safety to care for the needs of Jesus. We must also persevere in our commitment to serve.

Affirmation: I have realized the cost of commitment and I am willing to risk safety and security to serve him in the best way I can.

Reflection: We are often moved by the emotion of the moment, as when the people hailed Jesus as the king when he entered Jerusalem, but the test of commitment is our willingness to serve when our own safety is at risk.

Day Eighteen

Committed To Christ – Even To Death

Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”
- John 11:16

The setting for the Scripture reading today is that Jesus had been ministering with his disciples in Galilee and received word that Lazarus was sick and near death. After a few days Jesus decided to leave Galilee and go to Judea.

The disciples were perplexed. When they thought there was a chance to heal Lazarus they were willing to take the risk of going to Judea, but now he was more than likely dead and there would be no value in risking their lives just to visit his sisters.

The disciples argued with Jesus saying, “A short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” After a bit of bantering the disciples showed their true devotion to Jesus.

Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go that we may die with him.” It is quite a fatalist perspective but it does demonstrate the depth of their commitment to the Christ. They were willing to follow him even if it meant their death.

Many today would say, “There is no value in following Jesus to sure death. I’ll just remain here and carry on when he is gone.” Very few are willing to pay the price of the kind of commitment that the disciples were making.

Some would call this blind faith, but people of faith do understand what was happening. It was not blind faith but their faith was being challenged. Were they willing to risk even death to follow Jesus whom they called Christ?

That is the question facing most of us today. Will we persevere in our devotion to Christ in the face of the most extraordinary trials? Are we willing to face rejection and persecution for Christ? Or will we find some way to excuse ourselves from the commitment required to follow him all the way?

To know him is to serve him and to serve him is to be willing to die for him.

Prayer: Lord, I find myself sometimes making excuses as to why I can't do a certain thing you have asked. Grant me grace to follow all the way. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: To know him is to serve him and to serve him is to be willing to die for him. To follow Christ requires a willingness to endure extraordinary conditions and to even risk our own death.

Affirmation: I have chosen to follow Christ in wherever he leads, even into the darkest trials.

Reflection: We are not called to be sprinters, but we are called to be long distance runners. God is looking for people who will not shy away from challenges, persecution, or the most difficult circumstances. Are you ready to follow Him to Jerusalem?

Day Nineteen

Jesus Shows The Full Extent Of His Love

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.” - John 13:1

We’ve all played the “How much do you love me” game with our children or our true love. They’ll ask how much do you love me and we will spread our arms as wide as we can and reply, “This much,” because that is far as our arms can reach.

When Jesus spread his arms as wide as he could to show how much he loved us they drove nails in his hands. The disciples and others knew he loved them, but they just didn’t know how much. It was Jesus himself who said, “No greater love has any man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

There were many who followed Jesus, and a few he called friends. He said, “You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:14). This was not a statement he was making to coerce people into doing what he said, this is the statement that followed the one about giving your life for a friend.

The point Jesus was making is that the father was asking him to do what no one else could do and he would do it willingly for his friends. All he is asking his friends to do is realize the value of his friendship and respect his wishes and direction for their lives.

We know that while on this earth Jesus was God/man. He was both God and man, but it was not God who was dying on the cross it was the man in whom God dwelt. It was the man Jesus who would have his hands and feet nailed to the cross, a spear driven in his side and a mocking crown placed on his head.

It was this man who was driven to persevere all pain and humiliation to show his followers “the full extent of his love.” There is no sacrifice we could make that would equal his, but we are still asked to show our love by giving ourselves as he gave himself. You have shown God and the world the full extent of your love – what have they seen to be the full extent of your love?

Prayer: Thank you Lord for showing us how much you love us. Grant me the grace to return that love. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is no sacrifice we could make that would equal that of Christ, but we are still asked to show our love by giving ourselves as he gave himself.

Affirmation: I am not only committed to serving my Lord, even to the death, but I am also committed to serve him in all of my life.

Reflection: Jesus told his disciples that the greatest love one could show is to give one's life for a friend. Then Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command." Would Jesus call you his friend?

Day Twenty

Friends Will Persevere For Friends

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. - Romans 16:14

Priscilla and Aquila are unique in New Testament times. Men are usually referred to in leadership roles like teaching and preaching, and women are often referred to in support roles. This couple are known as a team and many believe that Priscilla was the leader.

They, along with all the Jews in Rome, were expelled from Rome and sent to Corinth. It was in Corinth where they met Paul. Paul lived with them for about 18 months and apparently spent much time in the Scripture with them schooling them in the message of Christ.

In time Priscilla and Aquila followed Paul to Ephesus and settled there. It appears that it was in Ephesus that their popularity grew as teachers and leaders in the church there. When Paul is writing his letter to the church at Rome it appears that they are there in Rome. Later, they appear to have been back in Ephesus.

This couple, as so many have done even today, committed their life to serving God wherever he led them. And, wherever they went they were recognized for their passion for Christ and their commitment to the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Paul mentions that they have risked their lives for him and not only for him but for all the churches in that region. Indeed, it appears that they arranged their lives and gave up their own dreams and ambitions for the sake of the gospel.

Tradition tells us that Aquila became the first bishop to Asia and that Priscilla and Aquila were martyrs for the gospel. They not only risked their lives but in the end gave their lives for Christ.

Priscilla and Aquila are a model of couples who are called to serve God in ministry. Such people are frontline warriors and merit our prayers. I encourage you to put pastors, missionaries and other ministry leaders on your prayer list and pray for them.

Prayer: Lord, this couple stand as a model for others to emulate. Grant me that grace. In Jesus name.

Message: Paul mentions that Priscilla and Aquila risked their lives for him and not only for him but for all the churches in that region. They arranged their lives and gave up their own dreams and ambitions for the sake of the gospel.

Affirmation: I have surrendered my hopes, dreams and ambitions to Christ that I might serve the kingdom of God well.

Reflection: Give some thought to the price Priscilla and Aquila were willing to pay for the kingdom of God then ask yourself the question, "Am I willing to surrender my own dreams and ambitions to serve others?"

Day Twenty One

A True Friend Perseveres With Us

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. - 2 Timothy 1:16-17

We know little about Onesiphorus for he is only mentioned briefly two times in Scripture, both times in 2 Timothy. We can only speculate as to the details of his life and relationship to Paul, but it can all be summed up in these two verses. We gain insight into the kind of man that he was and the commitment he had to his friend.

Paul prefaces his comments about Onesiphorus with verse 16, “You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me.” Paul was in chains and the others from Asia who had been with him had fled back home, undoubtedly fearful for their own life.

Then he addresses the household of Onesiphorus contrasting him with the others by saying, “He often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.” While others were abandoning him His friend searched him out and ministered to him. A true friend will persevere to serve, even when they are in danger themselves.

An interesting side note is the meaning of the name Onesiphorus. It is a Greek word that is a

compound of two words. One word means to derive pleasure from and the other means to bring tribute or tax. Thus, the meaning of Onesiphorus becomes "profit bringer" or one who bears profit. That is exactly what he was to Paul.

I don't know if I have many who could say of me, "I am profited for having him as a friend." However, I have had many friends who have blessed me in times of need and I could not have been as effective in serving God had it not been for these friends.

Onesiphorus is an example to us of what it is to be a committed servant in the kingdom of God. He did not just bring gifts, he became the gift.

Prayer: Lord, I have not always been a faithful friend. Grant me the grace to serve others above myself. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: A true friend will persevere to serve, even when they are in danger themselves.

Affirmation: I endeavor to be a true friend thinking first of my friends and their need to be served.

Reflection: Give some thought to the name "Onesiphorus" and its meaning. A contraction of two words; one meaning to derive pleasure from and the other means to bring tribute, or tax. We could translate that to mean "profit bringer." How many of your friends would call you "profit bringer." How many of your friends are profited by your friendship?

Day Twenty Two

Friends Among Believers

At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws. I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. The earth is filled with your love, O Lord; teach me your decrees.

- Psalm 119:62-64

Many years ago I was holding a series of meetings at a church in California. There was a young man there I only saw on the first night of the meetings and again on the last night. Being friendly to him I mentioned that I had missed him. His reply took me back a little. He said, "I went fishing and I'm not backslid either."

The depth of feeling in his response revealed something deeper than just a fishing trip. He wasn't backslidden, but it was obvious that his affections were not with those who were seeking God. It wasn't long until he didn't have time for church and Christian fellowship at all.

The writer of these verses in the Psalms knew the value of being friends with others who fear the Lord and who follow his precepts. He knew that the people he called friends had an influence on his life and he wanted to be influenced in the ways of the Lord.

He also knew, as apostle James, that "friendship with the world is hatred toward God" (James 4:4). Jesus said something similar in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters.

Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24).

When we are truly given to the Lord and his word we will seek out those who have the same belief system as we do. We look for people to befriend who are going to strengthen our faith and inspire us to greater things in our God walk.

Who are your friends? Have you purposed to surround yourself with committed believers, or are you content with maintaining friendships with people who do not share your depth of commitment to the Lord?

Prayer: The world is attractive to me and I’m not sure I have the strength to resist it by myself. Grant me friends in the faith. Amen.

Message: There is value in being friends with others who fear the Lord and who follow his precepts. Remember, the people you call friends have an influence on your life. Be careful to choose friends who will be an influence in the ways of the Lord.

Affirmation: I know that my choice of friends affects the depth of faith therefore I will choose friends carefully and only be close to those who influence me to greater faith.

Reflection: It would be good to give careful thought to those you spend time with. When you have been with them are you drawn closer to God or do you feel more distant from him?

Day Twenty Three

God Listens To Our Conversations

Those who feared the Lord talked with each other and the Lord listened. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. “They will be mine,” says the Lord Almighty, “In the day when I make up my treasured possession.”

- Malachi 3:16-17

What a statement this is, “Those who feared the Lord talked with each other and the Lord listened.” I can remember as a child my parents visiting with friends and invariably the conversation would go to the goodness of the Lord and the things he has done. According to this passage the Lord is listening in on those conversations.

Hearing my mom and dad sharing what they had seen God do and hearing their friends sharing what they had seen God do was like reading the faith chapter in Hebrews (Hebrews 11).

They would talk of the time my brother died in an industrial accident and God brought him back. My dad told the story of being snatched by a cable from beneath a falling 40 ton chunk of concrete so quickly that those who were watching thought he was under it. Why was my dad spared? When he saw the concrete coming toward him he only had time to cry out, “Lord you know I’m not ready to die.” The Lord heard his cry and spared him.

There were times when the stories continued late into the night. Often I have fallen asleep to the familiar sound of my mother rejoicing in the stories of healing and redemption.

All that time the Lord was listening. God has been listening to every story of faith that has ever been shared among believers and he is keeping a book of remembrance. God has a treasure chest of stories which tell of victorious faith.

I have a box where I keep my precious things. Their only value is the memories they hold. Occasionally I open that box just to remember. One day, we will be sitting around in heaven talking about the goodness of the Lord and he will bring out his book of precious treasures.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for listening to the memories. Amen.

Message: Those who feared the Lord talked with each other and the Lord listened. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

Affirmation: I often share the goodness of the Lord with others. I speak of his goodness, his healing, his peace and all of His blessings, and I know he is listening.

Reflection: Take the time to make a list of the times you believe that God intervened in your life or in the life of those you care about. Then develop that list into memories that are shared with others. Remember, the Lord is listening.

Day Twenty Four

Koinonia – A Persevering Fellowship

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. – Acts 2:42

The days after the day of Pentecost were like a honeymoon. It was a new relationship with the Lord that no one had ever experienced before. There was ecstasy among the people and they gathered often for fellowship and teaching about the kingdom.

These first members of the new movement that became known simply as “followers of the Nazarene,” and later, “The Way,” had experienced a baptism of God’s love that bound them together into a body of people devoted to one another.

This passage tells us four things about those early believers:

- ✓ They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They heard, they believed and they followed the teaching.
- ✓ They were devoted to fellowship. Their fellowship was more than just coming together it was *koinonia*. It was sharing their lives together. *Koinonia* is friendship that goes deeper than going to church together. It is being devoted to one another.
- ✓ They were devoted to breaking bread together. That included eating meals together but it also was in remembrance of the last supper Jesus had with his disciples.

- ✓ They were devoted to prayer. They practiced praying together. When this body of new believers came together they shared their needs and they took the time to pray over them.

Their Spiritual honeymoon would be short. Soon the persecution began and the foundation of devotion to one another that was formed in the early days became the glue which held them together through the times of trouble.

Being in *koinonia* style fellowship will give us strength to persevere in the face of the most severe trial. We need the strength of the body of believers to endure in these tumultuous times. We need teaching, *koinonia*, breaking bread and prayer.

Prayer: Lord, these are tumultuous times and I need the body of believers to stand with me, as they need me to stand with them. Grant us the grace to stand together. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Being in *koinonia* style fellowship will give us strength to persevere in the face of the most severe trial. We need the strength of the body of believers to endure in these tumultuous times.

Affirmation: I am committed to *koinonia* with my brothers and sisters in the faith so that together we are strengthened for the journey.

Reflection: Consider how the early church was committed to the teaching of the apostles, to fellowship, to prayer and to the breaking of bread. Ask yourself if you have the same commitment to those things.

Day Twenty Five

Partners In The Gospel

I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. - Philippians 1:3-6

Over the years we accumulate many who have called themselves our friend, and whom we have called friend. But there are few friends that we call partners in the gospel, and fewer yet that we know will persevere with us to the finish of the call of God.

Paul's prayer for the believers at Philippi was that they would be the kind of friend and partner who would stay with the work until it was completed. Paul had many partners in the ministry who served with him until his work was complete.

Timothy served with Paul until Paul stationed him at Ephesus to keep the work there founded in the faith. There was Priscilla and Aquila who were faithful partners in sharing the gospel in Corinth and Ephesus.

It seems that everywhere Paul went he would make converts who would then become partners in the gospel. This was not a one way street though. Paul was the kind of friend that he wanted others to be. There were many who came along beside him to enable him to be committed to the preaching of the gospel and Paul was committed to those partners.

He often makes reference in his writings to people who serve with him and writes of how he has served among them. Paul was committed to stay with his partners until the work was done.

If we are to have people around us who are committed to the same principles as we are then we are going to have to be committed to those people as well. A true friend is one for whom we are willing to make sacrifices in order that they might prosper.

Friends that we are willing to invest in become treasures as we grow in the Lord together. When I reach into my storehouse of treasured memories and reflect upon those whose lives we have been blessed to be partners with and my life is made richer.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to endure with my friends and call them to endure with me. Amen.

Message: If we are to have people around us who are committed to the same principles as we are then we are going to have to be committed to those people as well. Friends that we are willing to invest in become treasures as we grow in the Lord together.

Affirmation: I need friends around me therefore I must be a friend. I am committed to serving others and encouraging them.

Reflection: It was the company of friends who traveled with Paul that helped to make his ministry successful. Those friends had to be committed to the work in order to persevere through the rigors of travel and separation from family and loved ones. How committed are you to the ministry of kingdom service?

Day Twenty Six

Focusing On The Light Keeps Us Pure

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. - 1 John 1:7

Walking in the light gives us fellowship with the body of Christ and keeps us in right relationship with Him. This verse introduces a hint that we can walk without the light if we choose.

John puts the little doubting word “if” in the beginning of this verse. He says, “If we walk in the light,” as if to say we don’t have to walk in the light, we can choose not to. If we choose not to walk in the light then we release another whole set of circumstances.

In the verse prior to this one he says, “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness we lie and do not live by the truth.” He is saying that there are those who claim to be in the light but in fact they are in darkness. What is the evidence that they are in darkness? They don’t walk in fellowship with the body, and they are not free from sin.

In the verse following our verse for today he gives a remedy for walking in darkness. He writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

In context this passage seems to be saying that God’s will is for us to walk in fellowship with one

another and to be free from sin. Are we always successful at that? No, that's why he gives us a remedy. When we find that we are moving toward darkness in our attitudes or actions, we can remedy the situation by confessing and asking to be free.

Our struggles for righteousness are not over when we come to faith, in fact the journey of faith is a constant struggle against the tendencies of our flesh. To be successful in our faith walk we must be committed to persevere through every trying time and every time we find ourselves drifting back toward darkness we must again focus on the light.

Prayer: Lord, give me insight to see when my attitudes and behaviors are moving toward darkness. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Walking in the light is a choice. When we choose to walk in the light He keeps us in the way of righteousness. When we choose to not walk in the light we open another whole set of circumstances that we don't want to endure.

Affirmation: I no longer walk in darkness but I walk in the light. I know the benefits of being a "light follower" and I have taken advantage of that opportunity.

Reflection: In order to continually be effective in our faith we must establish the pattern of renewing our "light walk" daily. Spend some time reading, meditating and praying 1 John 1:5-10.

Day Twenty Seven

Persevere in Stormy Times

“I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke and began to eat. - Acts 27:34-35

Paul was on a prison ship being taken to Rome when a huge storm caught them and was about to destroy the ship. Paul had been warned in the Spirit that disaster awaited them if they continued on their journey and he had urged them to stay in Crete, but they ventured out into the open seas and were caught in a terrible storm.

They had struggled against the storm and sea for a long time until finally the sailors gave up any hope of survival. Then an angel appeared to Paul and told him that the ship would be lost but not one life would be lost if they stayed with the ship.

After fourteen days Paul brought the men together and told them to eat. That is where our passage for today begins. Paul saw the necessity for the men to come together to eat and pray. He saw they were exhausted and needed a little rest. He also knew eating would renew their strength and their courage would return.

There are many lessons for us in this story. One of those lessons is that when times get tough we must persevere, keep hope and not abandon ship. That is one of the reasons we need each other. We need someone among us who will encourage us to

continue pushing toward the goal and who knows when we need to replenish our energy and courage.

Another lesson to learn is we need the fellowship of people who are in the same boat as we are. We need times of setting down with others in the faith and hear what God is doing in them and through them, and to share where we are on our journey.

I was once in a communion service with a group of ministers. After receiving the bread and the juice I was suddenly struck with a new identity with those brethren. We shared the elements of the same body. We were now members of the same body.

Prayer: Sometimes I become impatient in trials and want to do things my way. Grant me the grace to trust you and others. Amen.

Message: When times get tough we must persevere, keep hope and not abandon ship. We need someone among us who will encourage us to continue pushing toward the goal and who will realize when we need to replenish our energy and courage.

Affirmation: By the grace of God I will not abandon ship when the going gets rough and I will encourage the others in the ship with me.

Reflection: This story of Paul and the ship carries several applications we should reflect on. Reflect on these points: First, what does it mean to you to stay in the ship; Second is the message of keeping the “team” of shipmates together; Finally, listen to the voice of the Lord; he will bring you through if you hold on.

Day Twenty Eight

Hope Produces An Enduring Faith

Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection.

- Hebrews 11:35

Hebrews chapter 11 is known by many as the faith chapter. It is in verse one that we are told, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Following that verse we are reminded of Noah, Abraham, Jacob and others. These all persevered, enduring many trials but knowing the one who promised was faithful. The record of faith would not be complete without the last verses of this chapter. From the Message:

There are so many more – Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets... Through acts of faith, they toppled kingdoms, made justice work, took the promises for themselves. They were protected from lions, fires, and sword thrusts, turned disadvantage to advantage, won battles, routed alien armies. Women received their loved ones back from the dead. There were those who, under torture, refused to give in and go free, preferring something better: resurrection. Others braved abuse and whips, and yes, chains and dungeons. We have stories of those who were stoned, sawed in two, murdered in cold blood; stories of vagrants wandering the earth in animal skins, homeless, friendless, powerless – the world didn't deserve them – making their way as best they could on the cruel edges of the world.

Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.

These precious saints of the past endured the most severe trials so that our faith might produce the reward of righteousness and eternal life. These faithful men and women, whose faith would not be complete without ours being added to theirs, are our examples of persevering faith.

Prayer: I am humbled at the record of those who have endured much to preserve the faith. Grant me that kind of faith. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Following Christ is not for the weak. And, for the weak who choose to follow Him, He gives the courage and strength to endure. It is our faith, and the faith of those who have gone before that will give us the strength to persevere to the end.

Affirmation: My faith is based upon His eternal promises and it is not affected by the trials I endure here. My faith, coupled with the faith of those who have gone before, gives me the strength and the courage to persevere.

Reflection: Give some thought to the faith of earlier generations and be encouraged by their commitment to endure the most severe trials, and even death, so that they might receive an eternal reward. Consider this: Is your faith that strong?

Day Twenty Nine

The Power Of A Good Eye

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... Let us fix our eyes on Jesus... who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. - Hebrews 12:1-3

The reason we call it the “faith walk” is that faith is required to walk it. It is not in the nature of man to have a disciplined walk if there is no hope of a rewarding outcome. The faith walk is based on the hope of an eternal reward, an everlasting life.

Jesus, the very revelation of God on earth, suffered and even died, so this hope could be passed on to those of us who believe. The writer of Hebrews calls us to remember those who’s enduring faith delivered the hope to us, and he calls us to consider the faithfulness of Jesus himself who endured the most severe trial to bring us this hope.

We are called to do three things in this passage. First is to remember the faith of those who have gone before. The second is to put aside everything that would be a hindrance to our faith walk. The third is to focus our attention on Christ who is our example of persevering in faith in difficult times.

The record shows that the faith of some gave them power to be victorious over their oppressors, but the record of others shows that their faith gave

them the courage to endure persecution, torture and even death. Trials will prove our faith if we persevere.

One of the challenges of the faith walk is laying aside some of those things that make us comfortable, or that give us pleasure, but which also hinder our growth in faith. It is easier to give God credit for the blessing of pleasurable things than it is to lay them aside for spiritual growth.

If our focus is on Christ we will be motivated to persevere in the faith. Jesus endured it all to show us that we can do it too. His example showed we can have the faith to persevere.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to accept the trials of life knowing that enduring faith produces eternal rewards. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: It is our confidence, or faith, in Christ as the revelation of God which gives us the conviction for a life of being committed to the principles of God's word.

Affirmation: I am daily adding knowledge of God to my mind and heart and faith in his word gives me the conviction for a life committed to the principles of the faith.

Reflection: In order to continually be effective in our faith we must establish the pattern of adding knowledge of God and his plan to our heart and mind. What can you do to make adding knowledge to your faith a reality in your life?

Day Thirty

Be Strong In Grace

What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire... But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

- 2 Peter 3:11-13

This is the final call in this series of devotions for us as believers to persevere in our faith, enduring whatever trials which come our way because we know the trying of our faith produces greater hope.

Peter, in the third chapter of his second book, is addressing the coming of the Lord. He is also warning about remaining faithful in those last days when scoffers will make fun of believers.

He warns that God is giving even the scoffers time to repent because he is not willing for any to perish. "The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (v9).

It is in this context that Peter asks, "What kind of people ought you to be?" Then he answers his own question with, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God." It is because we are people of faith, and our faith is in the promise of eternal life, that we have the strength to persevere.

I challenge you, particularly if you have been having difficulty with being faithful in your walk, to make a new commitment to your faith. We are living in perilous times and our faith is being challenged on every side; it is at this very time that our faith can be a ray of hope in this world of hopelessness and despair.

Queen Esther was challenged to risk her life to save her people. She accepted the challenge when her uncle told her, “Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”

Have you come into the Kingdom of God for such a trying time as this? Are you up to the challenge?

Prayer: Lord, we are in perilous times and we are being scoffed at for our faith. Grant us to be a bright light in this dark world. Amen.

Message: It is our confidence, or faith, in Christ as the revelation of God which gives us the conviction for a life of being committed to the principles of God’s word.

Affirmation: I am daily adding knowledge of God to my mind and heart and faith in his word gives me the conviction for a life committed to the principles of the faith.

Reflection: In order to continually be effective in our faith we must establish the pattern of adding knowledge of God and his plan to our heart and mind. Find ways to add knowledge of God to your faith a reality in your life.

Have You Heard of the Take A Knee Challenge?

The idea was inspired by watching coaches of sports teams tell their players to "Take a Knee" when they have something important or inspirational to share with them. You will also notice that many of the professional sports teams will take a knee after a game to offer thanks.

This is a 30 day challenge for followers of Christ to do two things:

First, is the challenge simply to make a purpose to "Take A Knee" every day at least once a day. We are simply challenging believers to bend their knee before the Lord every day for a short time to give thanks, ask for guidance for the day, wisdom to act appropriately in every situation and the power of Holy Spirit to be an effective witness for Christ.

Second is the challenge to invite 5 of your friends to accept the challenge. We all have at least 5 friends who would be willing to accept this challenge.

Everyone who accepts the challenge gets a free book of devotions. You will get a book of 30 devotions on prayer when you join the challenge and each of your friends who join the challenge will also get the book.

Our goal is to enlist 1000 Prayer Warriors who will pray daily for:

1. Renewal and Revival in the Body of Christ
2. A Spiritual awakening in our local communities
3. Another Great Awakening in America

For more information go to:

<http://www.take-a-knee.org>