

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 24 March 2024

Sermon Title : The Perseverance

Speaker : Rev Shannon Chan

Text : Galatians 6:9

INTRODUCTION

What does 'persevere' mean? The noun 'perseverance' refers to the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition. In light of our Discipleship Sermon Series, which ends with today's sermon, here are some things that the Bible teaches us about perseverance.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9, NIV)

Paul was writing to the Church in Galatia which was made up of Jews and Gentiles. At that time, there was a crisis in the church as some Jews insisted that the Gentiles had to keep the Law of Moses and do the works of the law, such as to be circumcised, to be saved. To correct these false teachings, Paul reminded the Galatian church that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ Jesus alone, and not by works.

In Galatians Chapter 5, Paul identified the marks of the Christian life which is essentially about walking by the Spirit. He also broached the subject of the Fruit of the Spirit and warned against the acts of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21)

In Chapter 6, Paul charges us to live by the Spirit, and especially as it relates to our perseverance in doing. Using the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition (AMPC) to give additional insight into the meaning of the passage, Paul is saying:

- become weary: lose heart and grow weary and faint
- doing good: acting nobly and doing right
- proper time: in due time and at the appointed season
- do not give up: do not loosen and relax our courage and faith

Two things to remember as we aspire towards perseverance in doing good i.e. perseverance in acting nobly and doing right:

1. Remember God's Character

As human beings, it is easy for us to give up when we face difficulties, but the greatest breakthroughs can come when we choose to persevere in doing good in tough trials and circumstances, even when we face opposition. There can be joy filled harvests if we choose to not lose heart nor grow weary and faint in doing good – acting nobly and doing rightly in tough times.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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- Instead of viewing God through our circumstances, we need to view our circumstances through God's character – seeing them through His lens and viewing them from His perspective. As we anchor upon Him and reflect on His word and promises, we are reminded that God is faithful and works all things together for good, even when it does not look good and we do not understand why things are happening in this way.
- Psalm 33:11 tells us that the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, and the purposes of His heart through all generations. God's Will will be done.

2. Remember the Necessary Journey

The Way of the Cross

If we want to be true to the call to be intentional disciples who make disciples intentionally, Luke 9:23 tells us that the starting is at the cross of Jesus. From that premise God calls us to the way of the Cross – to be willing to walk the 'crucified with Christ' life (the cruciform life) by living out truly the whole counsel of the Word of God, and to live out fully every God-directed (and not self-directed!) calling for our lives. When we take up our cross daily, we will have whole-life discipleship.

- To successfully live a whole life discipleship and to intentionally make disciples in like manner, we need to return to the way of the Cross.

First the call to BEing, not just the DOing

At the heart of the gospel is first the call "to be" and not just "to do"; to 'BEing', not just 'DOing'. Often in the spirit of fallen humanity, as Rev. Edmund Chan puts it, "doing" precedes "being", "accomplishments" supersede "authenticity", "goals" supersede "growth", and "ministry" supersedes "maturity". Unfortunately, that is sometimes how we assess people – how capable they are rather than how mature they are in Christ, how Christlike they are in everything they say or do. Rev. Edmund also says the critical challenge facing the church in the 21st century is reproducing authentic disciples of Christ – disciples with depth who are mature, through intentional disciple-making.

This does not mean we do away with goals, accomplishments, and the "doing" aspects of discipleship. But it does mean we must first have a biblical grasp of personal authentic discipleship that has maturity and depth that comes from the inside out.

- If we want to make disciples intentionally, we need first a track record of personal authentic growth. We need (let me borrow the phrase) to lead a "PDA" lifestyle:
P – Personal revival – the "I-Die-Daily" version of self-denial.
D – Divine appointments – daily time alone with God.
A – Active obedience – obey fully and promptly the whole counsel of God's Word in our hearts as well as in our doing.

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Character is being built during the process

Let us not be so excited about making disciples that we forget that the need is first that our characters are being built during the process. Corruption to self and others would ensue should we receive God's blessing when our own character is flawed.

Here are the words of John Newton, a slave trader who wrote the well-known hymn "Amazing Grace" after his conversion; he penned also words that pondered the 'Necessary Journey' in Christian Formation:

I asked the Lord that I might grow, In faith and love and every grace. Might more of His salvation know, and seek more earnestly His face.

Tw'as He who taught me thus to pray, And He I trust has answered prayer. But it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favoured hour, at once He'd answer my request, And by His love's constraining power, subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart. And let the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part.

Yea more with His own hand He seemed intent to aggravate my woe. Crossed all the fair designs I schemed, humbled my heart and laid me low.

"Lord why is this," I trembling cried; "Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?" "Tis in this way," The Lord replied, "I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set you free. And break your schemes of earthly joy that you may find your all in Me."

- No matter how capable a person may be, there needs to be a reckoning of the soul within; an honest assessment, a self-awareness that recognizes we need God to heal us and give us the breakthroughs that we need.
- No matter how competent a person may be, the ministry will be at risk if the character is flawed. Character is the person's inner wholeness and integrity; who a person is on the inside, as well as a consistent blamelessness and purity. Character is everything so we must never compromise on character.

Galatians 6:10 that follows is hugely instructive in intentionally making disciples. Perseverance in doing good, in acting nobly and doing rightly, is also about not losing courage in doing what is for the other's spiritual good even when it is unwanted, unappreciated and rejected. During such times, it is easy to lose heart in doing good, in growing weary in wanting to act nobly, rightly and truly. It is easier to allow things to be as they are, but that would not be right. Paul points us past our labours to faith's prize at the end – that those who persevere in doing good are promised to reap rewards, all to the glory of God. We hold on to this promise because we know that the Lord is faithful.

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CONCLUSION

Let us persevere in doing good. In all our doings, may our faith be found as faith maturing and may we be found faithful as we abide in the faithfulness of God!

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Galatians 6:9 slowly.
 - a. Why did Paul urge us, disciples of Christ, to not grow weary/lose heart in doing good but persevere?
 - b. Reflect on your daily routines the past week. Have you persevered in doing good?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. How has knowing that to persevere in doing good is to persevere in acting nobly, doing rightly and also about not losing courage in doing what is for the other's spiritual good even when it is unwanted, unappreciated and rejected, impacted you?
 - a. What are some challenges you have experienced in persevering to do good?
 - b. Why is it important to view your circumstances (especially when you face difficulties) through God's character, lens and perspective and remember that His Will will be done?

4. In living a whole life discipleship, we need to remember the necessary journey to: Return to the Way of the Cross, Prioritize BE-ing over DO-ing and Allow our characters to be built in the process.
 - a. Which of these 3 do you find most challenging?
 - b. What are some tangible ways you as an individual, and as a group, can intentionally achieve the above necessary journey?
 - c. How can your group members support one another to stay committed to achieving 4b. above so you may remain rooted in Christ, even in this fallen world?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony on how you persevered in leading your life in a way that is consistent with the whole counsel of God's Word. Include in your testimony the challenges you faced and how you overcame them, giving all glory to God!

OR

Give thanks to God for He is faithful and that in Him we can hold on to the promise that rewards to the glory of God await those who persevere in Him.

6. As a group, pray that God through His Holy Spirit, enables you, your group and our church to stay committed to a whole life discipleship. Seek the Holy Spirit's leading to stay true to the whole counsel of God's Word, return to the Cross to 'Be' in Christ so our character will be consistent with our belief and declaration. And we may be found faithful as we persevere in doing good, even when it is tough, bringing all glory to God.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Everlasting God – Lincoln Brewster <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgAmHBfHq2w>
2. Find Us Faithful – Steve Green <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKT5BCmvmq0>
3. The Jesus Way – Phil Wickham <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARSGgC9iQb0>

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