

THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH

II Timothy 2:8-13

Step Number Five - Perseverance: In Single-minded Steadfastness

Twelve Steps to a Fantastic Finish—We have discovered one thing and that is all of us want to do it.

The question is, do you want to pay the price?

And the price is seen in the twelve words that we are studying in the book of 2 Timothy.

The first word was INTEGRITY: Getting It All Together and we said that begins with a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. On your spiritual birthday the slate is wiped clean and you build on that biblical principal thereby developing a life of integrity.

Secondly, CONVICTION. As you fill your heart with biblical concepts you form convictions that are counter cultural. Therefore, you stand with Daniel and you purpose in your heart that you would not defile yourself with the king's meat.

Then comes the time when the culture says you are going to pay the price for those convictions and so the third step is COURAGE: I Am Willing To Pay The Price, even if it involves the laying down of my life.

Last week it became convicting because the fourth word was LEGACY:
What Am I Passing On to the next generation?

Paul told young Timothy that he is to pass on the things that he had heard from Paul to others who would be able to teach others also. We talked about our responsibility to pass on to our children and our grandchildren the gospel of Jesus Christ but also the message of a life that Jesus Christ makes the difference.

Now we come to the word PERSEVERANCE:
In Single-Minded Steadfastness, I Will Stay The Course. And our key verse is verse 10 when we get there.

The definition of the word perseverance is a determined continuation with something. It is single-minded steadfastness. It is singleness of purpose.

Why is it that most of the great people whose lives you study learn this principle in a secular world and we have not yet learned it in the Christian world?

You look at somebody like Abraham Lincoln and you see the statistics of everything he went through before he became president and you say that is a persevering man.

I really believe that the hardest thing for Christians when you talk on the subject of perseverance is to separate the flesh from the spirit because to be spiritual you have to be patient not persevering.

You have to wait to get instructions from the Lord and there are a lot of people who are dying while they are still waiting and growing gray hair. And we wait and we wait and we wait rather than persevering which means struggling and getting after it and staying on track and doing what needs to be done for the moment.

Now if I were to try to put down words that describe the concept that I am talking about today, I would use the following phrases:

- * Never say die.
- * Keep at it.
- * Keep the pot boiling.
- * Keep the ball rolling.
- * Stay the course.
- * Dig in your heels and grit your teeth.
- * Go down with the ship.
- * Die with your boots on.
- * Die in the harness.

Those are just a few concepts that would communicate my thought.

If I were to take one verse to communicate my thought it would be 1 Cor. 15:58.

Everything has been written.

Paul is at the end of the 15th chapter.

Chapter 16 is the greetings and the book is through. The last verse, *“Therefore, 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.”*

Now there is one very brief concept that I want to bring to your attention so you will understand

why perseverance is absolutely necessary.

You will notice in the book of Romans that Paul talks about suffering produces perseverance and perseverance produces character.

That is the process in Romans 5 of a person developing in a spiritual life.

A lot of people do not understand this but Jer. 12:5 is the best verse to describe what God does with us when we become Christians.

“If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses?”

If you stumble in the flatland when you are in a military operation, how are you going to do, in the jungles of Vietnam or the thickets by the Jordan when it really gets rough? You see what that teaches you, and the Lord is telling Jeremiah this, is that when you become a Christian God starts turning up the heat right away.

A lot of people do not understand that so when trials and heartache come they pull it all inward and think they have done something to deserve it

rather than relating to the circumstances positively and realize that God is orchestrating all of that for a future ministry of fruitfulness for us as individuals.

And the more you understand that concept the more you are going to understand perseverance. You need perseverance to persevere the curriculum he has provided.

Not to find a more comfy zone but to stay right in there and get after it and stay the course and learn what he is trying to teach you.

The two things he wants to do with you are to purify you and then make you profitable. And that is why it gets rougher and rougher as we go along in our Christian life.

Now last week we had three illustrations. If we are going to leave a legacy we are going to be a good soldier, we are going to be a runner who runs by the rules, and we are going to be a farmer who sows the seed and looks forward to fruit from the crop.

The next key is in the next verse. You will remember that the study ended last week with "*Think over these things and the Lord will give you understanding?*" The very next verse is where we are starting today, verse 8, and Paul comes right back with a command. As a good soldier, a good runner, and a good farmer, "*be keeping in mind Jesus Christ.*"

Verse 8, "*Be keeping in mind Jesus Christ, who has been raised from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel.*" That is a present tense imperative. It is a command. That means that if I am living a dynamic, victorious, Christian life, I am always thinking of Jesus Christ.

I think it was Charles Haddon Spurgeon who said, "*I do not think you can consider 15 minutes of my life of 40 years of ministry that I have not been thinking about Jesus Christ.*"

Now how do you and I do it? Be honest.
We get up early in the morning, you might have a devotional time and you are all focused on the Lord and you are listening to a praise hymn down the road and then somebody cuts in on you and you have forgot Jesus Christ for the rest of the day. And then maybe he will come back in at night when you are wrapping it up and you are having your little prayers.

The key to being able to persevere, the key to making a fantastic finish is to always have Jesus Christ in the back of your mind.
Verse 8 a, "*Be keeping in mind Jesus Christ.*"
Focus on him.

The devil is the greatest distracter in the world. If he can distract us away from thoughts about Christ and get us on our circumstances and our botched up priorities, he is nailing our hide to the wall. And he knows that.
That is why we have to constantly struggle with keeping our thoughts on him. That is the key.

The more I have studied this and the more I have thought of it this is the key to get you through adversity of all kinds as long as you stay focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 26:3, "*You will keep in perfect peace, him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*"

Back to verse 8a, "*Keep in mind Jesus Christ*"

and then there are two identifying phrases.
Do you see them?

Verse 8b, *“Who has been raised from the dead and he is a descendant of David.”*

There are the two things.

When you are *“keeping your mind on Jesus Christ,”* remember two things about him, why it is worthwhile?

First of all, you do not have a dead leader to your religion.

Verse 8b, *“He has been raised from the dead.”*

He is alive, he has been through death already and he is alive.

So keep in mind Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

And secondly, Paul says, *“he is a descendant of David.”*

Now maybe you do not quite understand it until you get to the ramifications of it.

Let’s put the VCR on rewind for a second and go back to the life of David.

David has just been successful in establishing the kingdom, his capital is in Jerusalem,

he has built a fabulous place to live and he and Nathan, the prophet, are breaking bread

and just having a time of fellowship together.

David says to Nathan the prophet,

you know I am living in a cool place

and the Lord’s ark is up here in the tent.

Nathan said, well do whatever is in your heart to do. Nathan excuses himself and goes on to bed

and the Lord taps him on the shoulder and says,

you blew it man. Get back there and tell him the truth. So he goes back and wakes up David

and said, David I blew it. The Lord sent me a message. “You are not building my house, your son is going to but I am giving you an eternal kingdom and that eternal kingdom will last forever.”

What happens is, when you trace from David to Jesus Christ you have the bloodline of the coming King. When Christ the Messiah came, he came as a King.

“*He came unto his own and his own received him not.*” They rejected him as King, so that launched us into the age of grace when we have been offered eternal salvation by this rejected King who is yet going to come and rule and reign and it could be tomorrow.

The King is coming and if you know Christ today, the blood of the King is flowing in your veins. You are a son or daughter of the King and you can look forward with great anticipation to the kingdom.

Somebody said:

Look backward see Christ dying for you.

Look upward see Christ pleading for you.

Look inward see Christ living in you.

Look forward see Christ coming for you.

And Paul says, “*according to my gospel,*” that last phrase, is his gospel different from ours? No.

There are two things about the gospel, the risen Christ and the soon-coming King. The risen Christ broke the bands of death,

paid the price for sin, and I respond to the living Christ, he changes me, I become his son or daughter and I am ready to spend eternity with him in his kingdom.

Verse 9. *“In which sphere of action I am suffering hardship even to the point of imprisonment as a criminal, but the word of God has not been bound.”*

“In which sphere of action” – what does that mean? While I have been preaching the gospel and some bad things have happened.

In this sphere of action of preaching the gospel I am suffering hardship to the point of being imprisoned as a criminal.

What Paul is telling you is, that it is not easy to present the gospel and he is telling Timothy that too.

He is *“keeping in mind Jesus Christ”* and the resurrection and his soon coming kingship but he says, *“I am suffering hardship.”*

Have we had that phrase before?

Do you remember what Paul told Timothy last week? *“Suffer hardships with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”*

Now he says, I am doing that, I am suffering hardship right now but mine is a little different.

I am being imprisoned as a criminal.

That word criminal is only used in one other place in the Greek New Testament.

It describes the two guys who were crucified with Christ.

They have literally treated Paul like a hardened criminal.

A long list of criminal activity and really the truth is the only thing he is guilty of

is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, the risen one and the soon-coming King.
And now he is in prison.

Is he having a pity party?
“*But*” . . . I love verses when you have a “*but*” in them because there is good stuff coming if you have some bad stuff in the first part and the good stuff is coming. What is the good stuff? “*The word of God has not been bound.*”
You cannot put it in prison.
You cannot chain it or you cannot change it.
You can get the minister but you cannot get the message.

John MacArthur released his new commentary on 2 Timothy recently.
In his commentary he says that under the city of Rome there were at one time an estimated 600 miles of catacombs weaving under the city representing 300 years of Christians who were either buried there or had their church services there because they had to be in secret.
And he said that there is one common inscription that is written more than any other writing on the walls of these catacombs and guess what it is?
“*The word of God has not been bound.*”

Paul has already received the verdict that he is going to be executed.
He is a prisoner and a criminal but “*The word of God has not been bound.*”
That is the most important thing.
It has nothing to do with the instrument, the servant. What happens to me is totally secondary.

It is *“the word of God”* that *“has not been bound.”*

Let me share some statistics with you.

Do you know how long it takes you to read through the Bible if you just read slowly?

Seventy-one hours. Do you know how long that is? That is 12 minutes a day.

If you have not read through the Bible then you are telling me that God is not important enough in your life to get 12 minutes of your day.

One of the greatest favors I can give you today is to urge you to read through the Bible before you die. That is a great lesson in perseverance.

D.L. Moody said, “The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.”

Martin Luther said, “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.”

Mark Twain said, “Most people are bothered by those Scripture passages which they cannot understand. But for me, the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand.”

The Bible is a living document, it cannot be bound.

Verse 10, here is our key verse.

“Because of this I am enduring all things for the sake of those who are chosen, in order that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

Because of what? *“The word of God cannot be bound.”*

“Because of this I am enduring.”

See that word *“enduring?”* That is our word.

That word translated is “persevering.”

For instance, can I give you an illustration?
Hebrews 10:36 has this word.

HEB 10:35 *“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.”*

HEB 10:36 *“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.”*

HEB 10:37 *“For in just a very little while,
“He who is coming will come and will not delay.”*

You are sitting around waiting for the promise of God to be fulfilled, right?

Wrong!

In the book of Hebrews those guys are getting ready to throw in the towel, they are suffering too much and they are going back under Judaism.

Remember that? What the writer is saying is that you have need of perseverance to stay by the stuff and stay in there and after you have done the will of God then you are going to receive the promise.

What is the difference between patience and perseverance?

Patience is passive, perseverance is active.

Patience is reactive; you are just reacting to anything that comes into your life.

Perseverance is you are proactive.

You are not having a pity party.

You have a sovereign God.

He is orchestrating the events of your life.

There are plenty of assignments to fulfill and if you happen to miss one

he is going to be sure and let you know about it and he will move you in the direction where you need to go to get it done.

Is it spiritual to wait around until God all the sudden drops a bomb on us and we are ready to go serve him in some foreign country or do something. No! As God lays it upon your heart in communion and fellowship with him, get off your duff and get busy with the work of the kingdom. That is perseverance, which is staying the course.

Paul "*I am persevering all these things*" and why am I doing it?

"I am doing it for the very elect or the chosen's sake." What does that mean?

What happens to you affects a whole lot of people.

If something happens to you it is amazing what happens to others as a result of that.

Why did the early church get a huge boost besides the coming of the Holy Spirit?

All the guys who were involved in the original elder group, the eleven of them, died martyrs' deaths.

That is fabulous fertile soil for building the church in a fantastic way.

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

And so Paul knows that and he is telling Timothy because of this "*I am enduring all of these things for the sake of those who are chosen.*" Why?

“In order that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

What is the *“eternal glory?”* Look at 1 Cor. 2:9.

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"

Let's look at the word *“perseverance”* a little closer.

It is the Greek word HUPOMENO.

HUPO is a preposition and MENO is a verb.

HUPO means under.

MENO means to remain.

So if you put them together the word perseverance means to *“remain under.”*

You have talked to somebody and said how are you doing and they said okay, under the circumstances.

That is where you need to be as a believer.

You see, too many believers, when they are under the circumstances, ask the Lord to change their circumstances. But the Lord says no, no I am going to change you, to suit your circumstances.

The key ingredient to Christian maturity and to Christian Christ-like character is HUPOMENO.

Perseverance is a character trait of those who are becoming more like Christ.

And that is why it is such an incredible, crucial step toward a fantastic finish.

Here are some words to help us understand this concept of perseverance that Paul is talking about to young Timothy:

* Persist

- * Stick it out
- * Stay the course
- * See it through
- * Stay until the end
- * Labor unceasingly
- * Spare no pains
- * Plotting
- * Tirelessness
- * Hard work
- * Tenacity

All of those words have to do with making a fantastic finish as a person who is truly persevering.

John Wesley and Charles Wesley were great, great men of God. We have been blessed in our hymns with Charles and messages and legacy with John. Let me share a little from John's journal for a couple of weeks in May and June.

- * Sunday a.m., May 5—Preached in St. Ann's; was asked not to come back any more.
- * Sunday p.m., May 5—Preached at St. John's; deacons said, "Get out and stay out."
- * Sunday a.m., May 12—Preached at St. Jude's; can't go back there either.
- * Sunday p.m., May 12—preached at St. George's; kicked out again.
- * Sunday a.m., May 19—Preached at St. Somebody Else's; deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.
- * Sunday p.m., May 19—Preached on the street; kicked off the street.
- * Sunday a.m., May 26—Preached out in a meadow; chased out of meadow when a bull was turned loose during the service.

- * Sunday a.m., June 2—Preached out at the edge of town; kicked off the highway.
- * Sunday p.m., June 2—Afternoon service, preached in pasture; 10,000 people came.

These guys go from one thing to the other,
from the ridiculous to the sublime
but they are always available to serve
and then God just all of the sudden
pours out blessings on faith.

Somebody said because of perseverance,
the snail reached the ark.

Vince Lombardi said it, “Unless a man believes in himself,
makes a total commitment to his career, and puts everything
he has into it, he’ll never be successful at anything he
undertakes.” That’s secular.
That same thing is true in your Christian life.
You have to pour yourself into it.

Now our study today ends with a hymn.
Verses 11, 12, and 13 are a hymn.
And it is a beautiful hymn.
And there are some great concepts in it but there are two
concepts that you have already looked at.
The resurrection and the reigning, soon-coming King.

In verse 11 you have the resurrection

and in verse 12 you have the reigning, soon-coming King and the ramifications of it.

Verse 11, *“Trustworthy is the word: For if we died together with Him, We shall also live together with Him.”*

What does Paul mean by that, when he says to Timothy, *“if we died together with Him, we shall also live together with Him?”* When Jesus Christ died on the cross 2,000 years ago, you and I died with him on that cross and that is made personal when we by faith appropriate what he did on the cross by receiving him as Savior.

We literally died with him, Romans 6, and were raised to newness of life.

Every salvation experience that is genuine involves the resurrection and the life.

We go into death, our sins are paid for, the law and it's judgment of us is cancelled because we are identified with the Savior and then we are raised to newness of life.

That is what John chapter 3 is when Jesus tells Nicodemus you must be born again.

And to the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 5,
“Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. All things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

John Hunter said, “The secret of a changed life is an exchanged life.

Jesus Christ doesn't want my dedication, he wants my death. A dead man can't do anything. He can only decay."

Jesus Christ takes over in our lives and the newness of life comes when we literally die with him. Notice that is the resurrection, okay.

Now look at verse 12 because he is going to talk about the descendant of David, the reigning one. If we are what?

Verse 12, "*If we are persevering, we shall also reign with Him; If we shall deny Him, He also will deny us.*"

What are the ramifications of Jesus being the descendant of David, the soon-coming King?

It is this, you have a choice.

You will either reign or be removed, you will either reign or be rejected, is the thought here and it is pretty sobering.

You be a good soldier, be a good runner, be a good farmer, keep your eyes on Jesus and you are not going to have any problem.

Because you are going to be persevering and you will reign with him.

Now what does it mean, that "*If we deny him, He will also deny us?*"

That sounds scary.

If you are in the crucible and you are going through circumstances that you do not understand, you can deny the Lord in the midst of that.

Now if you are a believer and you deny the Lord, you are not losing your salvation.

What is going to happen is that when you get to the judgment seat of Christ you are not going to make the medal round.

There is not going to be any gold, silver, and bronze. There is not going to be any precious stones because you denied him, you blew it.

Now your salvation is secure but there is not going to be any reward.

And I put down Revelation 3:11 there.

"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown."

Stay by the stuff.

Be faithful to the Lord even when it gets rough.

Do not deny him for personal comfort.

V.12 "We are persevering and we shall also reign with Him but if we deny him, He will also deny us."

Now the other possibility is there.

When you introduce suffering and you have to take a stand, what is the possibility?

You never had a relationship so when that pressure comes on, you literally deny him, what is really inside comes out and that is an apostate.

That is a person who has never come to know Christ and because of that he is going to be denied the right to eternal life because he does not hold on to his confession of Christ because he never did have a confession of Christ, a relationship.

Verse 13. If we are unfaithful, the Lord is unfaithful.

Is that what your text says?

You see, you expect that because if you deny, he denies. But that is not true of faithfulness.

“If we are unfaithful, He is remaining faithful for He is not able to deny Himself.”

He remains faithful. God is faithful.

His mercies are new every morning.

Numbers 23:19, *“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.*

Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

Nothing you do affects the character of God.

He will be faithful even if you and I are unfaithful.

Now his faithfulness will involve one of two decisions.

His faithfulness will involve the blessing that will come to you by being obedient but if you are living in disobedience, his justice will also be executed and that is consistent with his faithfulness.

Twelve Steps to a Fantastic Finish.

1. Have you started with *integrity*?
2. Are you forming *convictions*?
3. Do you have the *courage* to pay the price?
4. Are you concerned about leaving a *legacy*?

5. The only way you are going to get there is *perseverance*. Single-minded, steadfastness, you are going to stay the course and you are going to finish victoriously.

There are 14 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: Is Jesus Christ at the center of your thoughts and actions?

LESSON #2: Is the focus of your life on Christ?

LESSON #3: Jesus Christ is a living Savior who is alive, available, active, and aware of what is going on in our individual lives.

LESSON #4: Jesus Christ is the “descendant of David,” demonstrating His humanity and His reigning as king (verse 8).

LESSON #5: Is Jesus Christ a living, bright reality to you?

LESSON #6: Do you sense His smile of approval on you?

LESSON #7: Do you have your eyes on the Lord or on your circumstances?

LESSON #8: You can chain the messenger but you cannot chain the message.

LESSON #9: Because God is sovereign, the apostle is “enduring all things” (verse 10).

LESSON #10: Suffering is an integral part of the Father's program for each of us.

LESSON #11: Salvation is "in Christ Jesus" (verse 10).

LESSON #12: "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

LESSON #13: "If we are persevering we shall also reign with Him" (verse 12).

LESSON #14: "If we are unfaithful, He is remaining faithful" (verse 13).

STUDIES IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO
TIMOTHY

"The Twelve Steps to a Fantastic Finish"

Key verse 2:15 — "*Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.*"

STEP NUMBER FIVE – Perseverance: Single-minded Steadfastness I Will Stay The Course

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Key verse 2:10

Notes

v. 8 Be keeping in mind Jesus Christ, who has been raised from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel.

v. 9 In which sphere of action I am suffering hardship even to the point of imprisonment as a criminal, but the word of God has not been bound.

v. 10 Because of this I am enduring all things for the sake of those who are chosen, in order that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

v. 11 Trustworthy is the word: For if we died together with Him, We shall also live together with Him.

v. 12 If we are persevering, we shall also reign with Him; If we shall deny Him, He also will deny us.

v. 13 If we are unfaithful, He is remaining faithful for He is not able to deny Himself.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.
2. What is Timothy asked to do in verse 8?
3. What is said about the Word of God in verse 9?
4. Why is Paul enduring all the things that he is enduring, according to verse 10?
5. What great truth is stated in verse 11?
6. What happens if we endure, according to verse 12?
7. What happens if we deny Him, according to verse 12?
8. What happens if we are unfaithful, according to verse 13?
9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?
10. What lesson have you learned from this study?