



WEEK FOUR – PERSEVERING IN THE FAITH

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-13

We have already looked at this chapter in relation to 'Guarding the Faith', but there is so much to learn from Paul's writings that I want us to look at this again, from a different viewpoint.

Read Galatians 5:7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? If you've ever watched athletics, you will have seen when one competitor cuts in on another so sharply that the person (or both of them), stumbles, sometimes falls, but almost always, loses out.

As a keen athletics fan (armchair only), I well remember the 1984 Olympics held in Los Angeles. Mary Decker, from the USA, was strongly tipped to win the gold medal in the 3,000 metres. However, there was another very powerful athlete who did not conform to usual running practices, as instead of wearing spikes, she ran barefoot. This was Zola Budd, from South Africa but representing Great Britain. In that final, Budd had been running side by side with Decker for three laps when the American moved ahead. In an attempt to put pressure on Budd, Decker remained close in a crowded space. Decker stood on Budd, then shortly after, collided with the barefoot runner and fell spectacularly to the kerb, injuring her hip.



The race was won by a Romanian, Budd finished seventh and Decker was carried off the track in tears.

Inevitably there were recriminations, Decker denying that she had done it deliberately but the suspicion of not being honest never really went away. Although Budd won many races, that was the one for which she was remembered.

Perseverance means doggedly keeping going but always obeying the rules. It won't always **win** you the race, but it will show your character and you'll be there at the end.

I recall an illustration when a preacher was putting across the importance of perseverance. He spoke about a climber who was stuck on the mountain as night fell. The man found a crevice where there was a piece of rock that he could tie a rope around and hold him tight. And what I will always remember him saying is: "It wasn't important that he was cold; it wasn't important that he was lonely; it wasn't important that he was uncomfortable. It was only important that he was there in the morning."

- Can we determine that whatever happens, we will be 'there in the morning'?

Luke 9:57-62: The Cost of Following Jesus

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go. Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. He said to another man, "Follow me". But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God. Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

In these verses, Jesus is not saying that you shouldn't do all the tasks mentioned, but it is wrong to use them as an excuse to put off serving God. Persevering in the Gospel means we make it our priority; that we keep going regardless of the things that come across our path. It means that whatever happens, you don't quit.

- Have there been times in your Christian walk when you have felt like 'throwing in the towel'?
- Did you blame other people? Did you blame God?
- What made you decide to continue?

If we look at the scriptures, we find lots of examples of people who persevered for God.

In the Old Testament we have the story of Job who lost everything but his life. A gospel song describes him like this:

Now Job he was a righteous man, the devil could doubt it,

He surely loved his Saviour, there was no doubt about it

Satan cursed his body from his feet to his head

Then he told him all his children and his cattle were dead.

Then Job's wife said why don't you curse your God and die

But Job said, woman you speak like a foolish child.

'Cause, he ain't never done me nothing, done me nothing but good.

Job 19:25 says: “For I know that my redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.”

- Can we agree with Job on that?

The book of Jeremiah tells of how he was called by God, as a young man, to take a powerful message to the God’s people. One writer describes him: *“His faithfulness to share God’s revelations to an unfaithful nation is a great example to persevere in preaching, teaching, and sharing the Gospel. We must always endure to share the good news of Jesus with our lost world.”*

Apart from Jesus, Paul himself is the ultimate example of perseverance. In our second study we read the list of some of his sufferings (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Few of us I believe, would be able to keep going as he did **BUT** look at what he achieved. He wrote so much of the New Testament; he brought the gospel message and established churches from Italy across to Turkey and down to Syria and the Holy Land. God used him to heal the sick and raise the dead.

- How important is it to you that you have a close, daily walk with God?
- Do you make this a priority?
- Do you always seek to keep your integrity or are there times when you are tempted to blur the lines?
- What things get in the way of your Christian walk?
- As you become aware of these things, what do you do about them?

Timothy was like a son to Paul, and it seems that he endeavoured to follow the teachings of Paul.

Can you think of people in our present day who have persevered in what they believe?



Prayer:

Father God help me to persevere in serving you. May I always remember that you are ever walking alongside of me. I am never alone.

Amen