

Keep on Keepin' One!

Perseverance is a simple concept - just don't quit! "Keep on keepin' on," was a common meme 50 years ago. "Winners never quit and quitters never win," motivated that generation before that. "Don't die on third," strengthened people even earlier in the 20th century. But 2000 years ago perseverance and encouraging words about it were a specialty for the apostle Paul.

Keep in mind that perseverance is only possible when things get really rough. In times of ease we merely live life and enjoy its peaceful fruits. It's when serious challenges come that perseverance must rise to meet them. Paul warns of difficult times more than any other New Testament writer. And he lived what he taught. In II Corinthians 11 Paul tells of his victories over shipwreck, beatings, danger from rivers and robbers and his own countrymen, yet he stayed faithful to his commitment to God.

Paul dealt with real issues, not merely verbal, pie in the sky platitudes. He warns Christians that "difficult" times will come.

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. (II Timothy 3:51-5)

We are living in the last days and all Christians have for many centuries. Read the passage again carefully. Take specific note of what things actually create "difficult times." It is eminently clear that these negative traits are alive and well today. From the evening news to Main Street USA we see them splashed across daily life. From Washington D. C. to state and local venues this list of evil stretches our patience and challenges our sensibilities. *But we must not allow these challenges to diminish our dedication or steal our souls!*

Perseverance calls from the pages of scripture to the hurting hearts of every generation, "Be strong and courageous," Joshua 1:9; "keep every commandment... that you may be strong," Deuteronomy 11:8; "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid..." Deut. 31:6; be "always of good courage..." II Corinthians 2:5-8. Perseverance is accomplished through spiritual strength and courage. "Perseverance appears 22 times in the New Testament - perhaps God is making a point. God, Himself, gives us perseverance and encouragement (Romans 15:4, 5) but we must pick up this precious gift and put it to work in our minds and hearts and hands! As in Paul's day, times are tough and they will probably get tougher, and so must our perseverance! We must continue to serve God and one another with, "the strength which God supplies," (I Peter 4:11). Through thick and thin, "Keep on keeping' on!"

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