

"Act with Perseverance"

ACT UP - Small Group Campaign Fall 2017

October 29, 2017

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

From the diary of John Wesley. . .



Sunday, A.M., May 5

Preached in St. Anne's. Was asked not to come back anymore.

Sunday, P.M., May 5

Preached in St. John's. Deacons said "Get out and stay out."

Sunday, A.M., May 12

Preached in St. Jude's. Can't go back there, either.

Sunday, A.M., May 19

Preached in St. Somebody Else's. Deacons called special meeting and said I couldn't return.

Sunday, P.M., May 19 Preached on street. Kicked off street.

Sunday, A.M., May 26

Preached in meadow. Chased out of meadow as bull was turned loose during service.

Sunday, A.M., June 2

Preached out at the edge of town. Kicked off the highway.

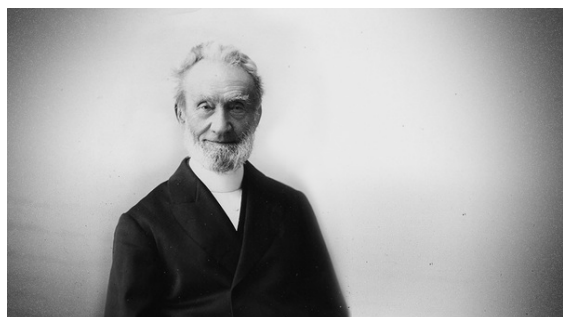
Sunday, P.M., June 2

Afternoon, preached in a pasture. Ten thousand people came out to hear the message

To ACT WITH PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is defined as *"continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition..."*

Another great example...



One day George Muller began praying for five of his friends. After many months, one of them came to the Lord. Ten years later, two others were converted. It took 25 years before the fourth man was saved. Muller persevered in prayer until his death for the fifth friend, and throughout those 52 years he never gave up hoping that he would accept Christ! His faith was rewarded, for soon after Muller's funeral the last one was saved.

To ACT WITH PERSEVERANCE

With the issues resolved at the Jerusalem Council, the gospel is unleashed for all people and all nations...no longer are those who accept Jesus required to follow Jewish law...the message is clear...

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

As we study the book of Acts this week we find Paul on his second and third missionary journeys. Paul and his companions travel around 3000 miles on each of these journeys...mostly by foot...to take the good news about Jesus to people wherever they are.

Paul would visit churches established on previous journeys to encourage them and he would preach in the synagogues and in the market squares to

others about Jesus...listen to some of what Paul went through as he traveled and preached and taught about Jesus...

Acts 16:19-24 - Paul, on his second missionary journey, comes to Thyatira, cast a spirit of divination out of a slave-girl...

But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

In Thessalonica...we read in Acts 17:5,13

But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar...

Then Paul went to Berea where he preached to the Jews in the synagogues there...many believed...

But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

On his third missionary journey, comes to Ephesus...Acts 19:23-29

About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and

said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.”

When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia.

Throughout his journeys he was attacked by the Jews, faced riots, beatings, and imprisonment, and faced great opposition. But the one thing that Paul does in the midst of all of this is...he never gives up! Paul ACTS WITH PERSEVERANCE

I remember reading a story about William Wilberforce. You can learn about his story in the film, *Amazing Grace*.



Wilberforce was discouraged one night in the early 1790s after another defeat in his 10-year battle against the slave trade in England. Tired and frustrated, he opened his Bible and began to leaf through it. A small piece of paper fell out and fluttered to the floor. It was a letter written by John Wesley shortly before his death. Wilberforce read it again: *"Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your*

*glorious enterprise in opposing that (abominable practice of slavery), which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. **But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might.***"

Paul understood this..."*But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might.*"

This is why Paul could say...Philippians 3:13-14 – ***"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."***

Personal Testimony - I have often thought about quitting ministry...I have...but sooner or later I remember that I am called by God to serve His church...to be here at North East...and when knocked down I get back up and go "*in the name of God, and in the power of His might*"...always praying, "*You Lord, not me.*"

We are all called to PERSEVERE...

Christian singer, Stephen Curtis Chapman wrote a song in response to the previous national election...there is a section that goes...

***Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall
Only one stands through it all
It's the kingdom of
The God of grace and love
And I'm not worried because I know
God is on the throne.***

Can't you hear Paul singing those last lyrics? In Thyatira, Thessalonica, Ephesus...in the midst of trials, riots, beatings, imprisonment...



...in the jail cell singing to God in the midst of the other prisoners..."*And I'm not worried because I know God is on the throne*"...Therefore...I will persevere...

You and I need to pray to God for help...ask God to give us a non-anxious presence in the midst of the chaos around us...in the midst of opposition...in the midst of the craziness life throws at us...It is this non-anxious presence that will be like a lighthouse in the midst of darkness...a beacon calling out to people around us, throughout our community, who are anxious, scared, hurt...They will look at us and wonder how we can not be anxious, cannot be scared...how we can hope in the mist of chaos and grief...and they will want to know where our strength comes from...they will want what you and I have...and in that search they will find Jesus...

Paul went to churches previously established to encourage them...Who can you and I encourage?

In the midst of opposition, trials, confusion, discouragement, and pain...



Trial of the Apostle Paul
By Nikolai K Bodarevski

Paul trusted God and persevered...What situation are you going through in which God wants you to persevere, to trust Him?

What situation are you facing where you could testify and witness to the world of the power of God by showing others a trusting presence in the midst of what you are going through?

Perhaps you feel like your life is in ashes...Hear Jesus' voice...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."* Perhaps you feel like you've been "burned to a crisp" by another, hurt and stepped on...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."* Perhaps you feel like you can't change...the "fire" is gone...the passion has faded...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."* Perhaps you feel your marriage, your finances, your health, your prayer life, your work...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."*

Perhaps you are glued to the television and Facebook...stressed, angry, depressed more each day about the news...like the psalmist you are shouting to the heavens, *"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord...Lord, hear my voice..."*...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."* Yes, I know...but I need help with this...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."* Ok, but I need an answer, Lord...I'm praying...help me...where should I turn...*"I am the resurrection and the life..."* What is the answer, Lord...what is the answer...*"I AM..."*

Jesus said to Martha, *"I am the resurrection and the life."*



"Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who believes in me will never die." And then Jesus asked a question, not simply to Martha, but to all of us...down through the centuries...

Jesus simply asked, *"Do you believe this?"*

We can Believe...When life is at its darkest...we can Believe...out of the ashes will come new life...We can Believe...no matter how dark the world may seem – one day all of creation will be redeemed – the kingdoms of the world will fail – the kingdom of God is eternal and we have been given a place in it.

The book of Daniel ends, “***as for you, go your way until the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days, you will rise again to receive the inheritance set aside for you.***”

That is God’s message to us...”*go your way until the end*” – ACT WITH PERSEVERANCE...and then “*you will rest*” – such darkness, hard times, difficulties cannot last...will not last...not personally...not nationally...not globally...for I am God...and I will have the victory...”*You will rise again to receive the inheritance...*” – out of the ashes I will give you life...This is what my Son has shown you...This is what I have shown you through the prophets...through the incarnation...through the cross...through the empty tomb...I have shown you...that you may know...Believe...Persevere...