

**duplicating
discipleship**

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● **lesson five**

the perseverance of paul

Lesson 5: The Perseverance of Paul

“At the timberline, where the storms strike with the most fury, the sturdiest trees are found.”

Hudson Taylor, missionary

A Good Definition of Perseverance--steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.

Let’s look at three areas of Paul’s life. Keep these questions in mind as you look study the following Scriptures.

What was Paul persistent about? What was his purpose? What is the opposite of perseverance?

Paul had difficulties, obstacles, and discouragement? What is the natural reaction to these things? What if Paul had had a “normal” reaction to these negative things? What if he had “quit”?

Yet Paul was he able to endure/persevere through all of this. Let’s try to discover how he was able to do so.

A. What were some of the difficulties, obstacles, or discouragements that Paul faced?

- **2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (NIV)**

²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (NIV)

How many difficulties can you find in this passage?

- 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
 4) _____ 5) _____ 6) _____
 7) _____ 8) _____ 9) _____

- **2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (NIV)**

⁷ Or because of these surpassingly great revelations, therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me ⁹ but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Paul's thorn in the flesh is not clearly stated. Many think it was some problem with his eyes or eyesight. Some say perhaps it was a marriage problem. Whatever it was, it was a great challenge for him.

The lists above would encompass the first 21 years of Paul's 32-year ministry; here are some more of his troubles during the last 11 years of his life:

1. The 4th and final year of the 3rd missionary journey
2. Paul's arrest and treatment in Jerusalem
3. Paul's two-year imprisonment in Jerusalem
4. Paul's perilous journey from Caesarea to Rome that included:
 - a) Another shipwreck
 - b) A snakebite
5. Paul's first Roman imprisonment in Caesarea
6. Paul's "house arrest" imprisonment in Rome
7. The three-to-four year period between the first and second Roman imprisonments
8. Paul's second Roman imprisonment which resulted in his execution

Without looking at the list or verses above can you list at least 12 of Paul's difficulties?

- 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
 4) _____ 5) _____ 6) _____
 7) _____ 8) _____ 9) _____
 10) _____ 11) _____ 12) _____

Under what conditions are you most able to persevere in the faith?

Least able?

What do you consciously do to put yourself where it is easier to persevere? Or, are you strong enough in the Lord to not need any help to persevere?

How in the world was Paul able to endure/persevere through all of this?

B. Paul had a clear purpose. What was it?

“But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles...” Gal.1:15,16a (NIV)

Paul understood that his mission for God was to_____.

Let’s look at three areas: 1) His faith/belief/ in God...2) His trust in God’s sovereignty... and 3) a little help from his friends.

C. Paul’s beliefs in God that help him to persevere...

Please read the following passages.

- **2 Corinthians 4:7-18 (NIV)**

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted but not abandoned struck down, but not destroyed ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life

of Jesus may also be revealed in our body ¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹² So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

¹³ It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken. Since we have that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself ¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- **2 Corinthians 7:9b-10 (NAS)**

^{9b} Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- **Philippians 3:8 (NIV)**

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ.

List six beliefs that Paul had about God that surely helped him to endure many obstacles!

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

D. What did Paul think about God being in control? Please read Romans 8:28

- **Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

²⁸ “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

How could Paul believe this with all the things that happened in his life?

E. A little help from his friends...

- Acts 9:26-27 ²⁶ when he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.
- Acts 9:23-25 ²³ after many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, ²⁴ but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵ But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. (NIV)

Who helped Paul in the two passages above? _____, _____

Paul expressed gratefulness many times to men and women and churches that helped him in his life and ministry.

Paul was able to persevere because he knew his purpose, his faith in God, his trust in God's sovereignty and encouragement from different people that were brought into his life!

You know of the many difficulties you have faced in your life even if not as severe as the Apostle Paul. What is your purpose in life?

What core beliefs about God can you say/think to yourself that will help you persevere?

Who are the people you think of God has brought into your life to give you the encouragement that you need to persevere?

God knows you. He loves you! You can persevere!

Modern-day example of Perseverance: Butch Price

Butch Price has served as Church Administrator and as an elder at Waxahachie Bible Church through very difficult days. After having multiple surgeries and treatments for cancer, Butch has continued to follow the Lord faithfully in the midst of painful suffering. Radiation took away his ability to swallow and to speak. Nevertheless Butch continues to invest in the Lord's work as he writes his thoughts down on a writing board. He continues to visit the sick and hospitalized giving words of encouragement and praying for their needs. He simply has never quit serving the Lord in spite of many obstacles.

