The Power Of Continuity

Acts 2:37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.
40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
41 Then they that gladly received this word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Introduction:

And they continued steadfastly...

- With those four words Luke caps off the extraordinary events of the day of Pentecost
  - and characterizes the spirit of the New Testament church.
    - They continued steadfastly.
- The verb that Luke used here means stubbornly persist.
  - They would not quit,
  - they would not be turned aside,
  - they were tenacious about this thing,
  - and come what may they had their heart set to continue!
- Their new life was not a simple passing excitement,
  - it was not a mere transient passion,
  - rather it was something that they were determined to continue in.
- What happened in the upper room was not just a one time experience to them,
  - it was not just a seminal moment that would never be repeated,
  - but from the very beginning they were determined
    - that no matter what happened to them,
    - they were going to continue in that experience.

Why not?

- After all it was their persistence that finally yielded the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.
- For ten days, 120 faithful servants of God had tarried in the upper room waiting for the promise of the father.
  - For ten days the sun settled into the western sky in the evening and rose over the eastern horizon in the morning
and still there was no sign of the promise.

- For ten days they rejected every excuse to return to their normal life,
  - to go back to the way things had always been.
- And for ten days they had each determined
  - that no matter how long it took
    - they were going to stubbornly persist in that upper room
      - until the promise of the Father was poured out.
- Acts 1:14 used the same verb that Acts 2:42 used to describe that same group of people:
  - These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...

They were persistent,
- they wouldn’t be turned aside,
  - they would not be denied,
    - and nothing was going to distract them from the promise.
- In the face of every opportunity to quit... They continued.
- In the face of every excuse to toss in the towel... They pressed on.
- When that little voice of doubt was thundering through their heart,
  - it’s been 10 long days and nothing has happened,
  - you are wasting your time,
  - still they continued together,
  - in one accord in prayer and supplication.
- That’s the kind of stuff that the early church was made of.
  - That’s the mindset in which the church was born.
  - They continued.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
- And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
  - And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
  - And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
- Because they continued,
  - because they didn’t quit,
  - because they pressed on,
  - because they made up their mind that they were going to be there every single day until something happened,
    - they were there, in one accord, in one place, when the day of Pentecost was fully come and the promise was finally poured out!

Its only natural then, that the same spirit in which the church was born is the spirit in which it would persist.
• They determined in their hearts to continue until the promise was poured out
  o and then, once it was done they determined to continue steadfastly
    ▪ in the same incredible experience that they had just shared.
  o No matter how Rome reacted, they were determined to continue.
  o No matter how the Jews received them, they were determined to continue.
    ▪ Opposition would arise, but they would not stop.
    ▪ Trouble would come, but they were determined to continue in the faith.
• That early church would face trial and tribulation on every front.
  o They would be rejected by their own peers,
    ▪ persecuted by their own government,
    ▪ and hated for His name’s sake.
  o They would be put out of the synagogues,
    ▪ hauled before magistrates and judges,
    ▪ their best and their brightest would be stoned to death in the streets,
      • but none of that mattered because they were determined to continue.

Continue is the verb.
• It simply means to persist.
  o It means to carry on.
  o It means to be consistent.
• Steadfast is the modifier, it means stubborn.
• Let me explain what it means when you put the two together.
  o Persistence means that you keep trying as long as you feel like there is a legitimate chance that you might succeed.
    ▪ But stubborn persistence means that you keep on trying even when you know there is no legitimate chance at all.
  o Persistence means that you hold fast to the faith as long as things are going your way, as long as it seems like everything is going to be OK.
    ▪ But stubborn persistence means that you hold fast to the faith, no matter what happens in your life.
• Long after trouble settles in,
  o long after your fair weather friends have abandoned you,
  o long after the whole world has arisen against you,
  o long after everything has been turned upside down,
    ▪ you are still going to be there, continuing on,
    ▪ regardless of everything that has happened
    ▪ because you have determined to hold out to the end!
• That’s what it means to continue steadfastly!

It’s about an experience that is bigger than a single moment.
- It’s about a lifestyle that is further reaching than a single day.
- It’s about a change that completely alters the course of your life.
- It’s about a determination that you will never turn back to what you used to be.
  - That’s the portrait that the book of Acts paints of the early church.
  - They continued steadfastly.

The Daily Grind
In his book, *Starting Over*, Charles Swindoll wrote about boyhood vacations at his grandfather’s cottage near the Gulf in South Texas.
- His grandfather employed a cook there, an old black man who was friendly and unique.
  - While barbecuing one day, the talkative old hired hand began to regal the young Swindoll with the stories of his life, the various ups and downs that he had experienced in his unique and colorful life.
    - During one such story he stopped and knelt down to the young man’s height
    - and said to him, “Charles, the hardest thing about life is that it’s so daily.”

Think about it for a moment.
- The hardest thing about life is the daily grind of it all.
  - It is one thing to stand in a powerful anointed church service
    - and purpose in your heart to live all of your tomorrows
    - under the influence of that powerful spirit that you feel.
  - It is, however, an entirely different thing,
    - to hold fast to that commitment in the day-to-day grind of life.
- How many commitments made in the fervency of a moment
  - that later fall victim to the grind of living day in and day out
    - in a life that is so “daily”?

The kind of commitment that I’m talking about tonight
- is not the kind of thing that is born under the spark of momentary inspiration
  - but quickly dies out and fades away.
- This isn’t some summer romance that is quickly forgotten when life returns back to its routine.
  - This isn’t some fleeting blessing that you received at a camp meeting
    - or conference somewhere that you quickly forget about.
    - I’m talking about consistency.
    - I’m talking about continuity.
    - I’m talking about stubborn persistence that simply refuses to die out!

How do you overcome the “daily” nature of life?
• How do you keep your passion for God from falling victim to the daily grind?
  o Let me tell you how they did it:

Acts 2:46
*And they, continuing daily* with one accord *in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,*

• They continued daily!
  o They continued steadfastly and they did it on a daily basis.
• The fire didn’t have time to burn low,
  o because they stoked the embers every day.
• The passion didn’t have time to grow old
  o because they renewed it every day.
• They went to the temple every day!
  o They gathered together with Christian fellowship every day.
• They conquered the daily nature of life
  o by continuing every day with the experience that they discovered in the upper room.
    ▪ Daily they prayed.
    ▪ Daily they studied the word.
    ▪ Daily they had godly fellowship.
    ▪ Daily they worshipped.
    ▪ They continued daily!

I long for the day when we can have the church house open every day for folks to come and pray.
• I long for the opportunity to have fellowship with the people of God on a daily basis.
  o I understand that life gets in the way sometimes.
  o I understand that it isn’t feasible... yet.
• But I also know that the kind of stubborn determination that I’m talking about will not be denied.
  o It says, if I can’t go to the church house,
    ▪ I’ll have church in my house.
  o If I can’t have daily fellowship with the people of God,
    ▪ I’ll have daily communion with God, himself.
  o If I can’t worship together in unity with other believers on a daily basis,
    ▪ I’m going to worship wherever I am on a daily basis.
• Whatever it takes,
  o wherever it takes me,
    ▪ I will continue in this thing, daily!

**Continuity**
That was the attitude of the early church and it is echoed throughout scripture.
The twelve told the multitude of disciples in Acts 6:4 that they would give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.

Acts 6:4
But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

- They didn’t have time to wait tables,
  - they didn’t have time for the myriad of distractions in this life.
- Their primary focus was that they would be able to continue steadfastly.
  - It was more important than anything else to them.
  - Nothing was going to get in the way.
- They wouldn’t let the experience of Pentecost die out in their lives
  - because they were determined to experience it every single day!

- Listen, this is what they preached to their converts:

Acts 13:43
Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

- Having experienced the grace of God,
  - having experienced the power of Pentecost,
    - they persuaded their converts to continue!
- You gotta do this again tomorrow.
  - You gotta experience this again on the next day.
    - You can’t afford to let it run cold,
    - you can’t afford to let it take second place to any thing else.
    - You must continue!

- In Acts 14, after they stoned Paul and left him for dead,
  - the Holy Ghost stood him back up
    - and sent him back into their city.
- Do you want to know what he preached?

Acts 14:22
Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

- Under the anointing of the Holy Ghost he began tell the believers and demonstrate to the unbelievers
  - that the power of this conversion experience is the power of continuity.
    - CONTINUE in the faith!
    - CONTINUE in the grace of God!
CONTINUE daily.
CONTINUE steadfastly!

- That ambassador of heaven stood before the crowd that had just stoned him to death
  - and looked them in the eyes and said
    - "I've got my foot on the rock and my mind's made up!"
- There's something powerful in the testimony of a man of God or a woman of God who simply refuses to quit!
  - That's the power of continuity.
    - No matter what happens,
    - no matter what life brings me,
    - no matter what anyone does to me –
      - I WILL CONTINUE!

Paul stood before Festus in the 26th chapter of Acts and began to share his testimony.
- He told him about the experience on the road to Damascus,
  - how that God arrested him and got his attention,
  - how he saw a vision and received a divine call upon his life.
- Then he told Festus – I was not disobedient to that vision.
  - I didn't just acquiesce to the call of God because of the environment.
  - I wasn't just caught up in the moment.
  - It wasn't just some temporary insanity that gripped my soul.
    - I made up my mind to be faithful to what I had just experienced.

- He began to tell Festus how the Jews caught him in the temple and were determined to kill him
  - but how that God had preserved him
  - and then he capped off his testimony with these words:

Acts 26:22
Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great...

- That's the heartfelt cry of the apostle in chains,
  - even from the prison house,
    - Festus, I continue...
- That's the story of that first century church in a nutshell,
  - they continued steadfastly.
- It was stubborn kind of persistence
  - that said nothing in this world can turn me around!
    - Let the strong wind blow... I will continue.
    - Let the dark trials come... I will continue.
When I walk through the lonely valley and when I drink from the bitter cup... I will continue!
- They stoned them in the streets, but still they continued.
- They burned them at the stake, but still they continued.
- They threw them in the dens with lions and great crowd roared at their demise, but still they continued!
- Their very government turned against them,
- all of society rejected them,
- they were shunned and made to be outcasts,
- but it mattered not – They continued steadfastly!

- What begun with their initial obedience to the gospel was continued by their daily living.
  - It was more than just a catchy phrase in the Book of Acts,
    - it was the philosophy of their life –
      - They continued!

The entire testimony of the book of Acts is summed up in those powerful words in Acts 2:42 – They continued steadfastly.

- There is a principle in motion there.
  - The testimony of their lives made an eternal impact on their world,
    - not because of what happened in a single moment,
    - not because of the events of a single day,
    - not because of what they experienced in the upper room
      - but because they continued in it!
- Most things of eternal value are not accomplished in a single moment or in a short period of time.
  - Continuity is the key to having an eternal impact.
- The testimony of a life may be demonstrated in individual moments,
  - but none of the moments standing alone encompasses the whole of the testimony.
    - It is the sum of a life lived,
    - the sum of faith acted out,
    - the sum of lessons learned
      - that results in a lasting impact.

A church plant doesn’t change the atmosphere of a community overnight,
- a single saint of God living righteous and holy in perverse atmosphere
  - doesn’t alter the fabric of a community in a single moment,
- an outpouring in the upper room doesn’t turn the world upside down,
  - by itself.
- A single service where 3,000 are baptized in Jesus name doesn’t change the course of a nation...
  - But when they continue,
    - when they do these things day in and day out,
    - day after day after day,
• the result is that in Acts 17 they cried out against the church saying,
  • “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.”
• The world wasn’t turned upside down on the day of Pentecost.
  o The world wasn’t turned upside down in Samaria.
    • The world wasn’t turned upside down on the road to Damascus.
      • It was the power of continuity that turned the world upside down.
• It was the daily testimony;
  o it was the unending procession of days where they continued steadfastly.
    • It was the stubborn persistence that said I will not quit,
    • we will not falter,
    • we will not be so easily dismissed.
• It was the day-to-day continuity that gave rise to the powerful testimony...
  o These have turned the world upside down.
    • That’s the power of continuity!

It’s not what you do in a single moment.
• It’s not what happens in a single service.
  o It’s not about the events on one tragic day.
• It is the preponderance of the continual testimony
  o of a life that stubbornly hangs on,
    • that just keeps pressing on,
    • that will not waver,
    • that will not quit
    • that keeps putting one foot in front of the other
    • that keeps continuing daily!
      • That’s the power of continuity!
• Its not what you are today
  o or where you will be tomorrow
    • or what’s going to happen the next day,
      • it is the consistent testimony of a life lived for Christ
        o regardless of what happens from day-to-day!
• It is the ever-increasing memorial of a life that simply continues...
  o regardless of what ever happens to them or around them.
    • That’s the power of continuity!

Salvation
You can read it all through the gospels, over and over again.
• This is what they preached,
  o this is what they taught,
  o and this is what they expected:
Colossians 1:21-23
21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled
22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:
23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...

This isn’t just a good idea, folks.
• This is what it takes to stay saved.
  o You used to be alienated,
  o you used to be the enemy of God
  o but he has reconciled you,
    ▪ IF YOU CONTINUE IN THE FAITH
    ▪ grounded and settled
    ▪ and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel!
• That’s the power of continuity – It will save your soul.
  o Let me tell you what the key is to salvation is,
    ▪ the key to not being moved away from the hope of the gospel –
      ▪ It is continuing daily.
• You need a stubborn kind of persistence to grip your soul,
  o an attitude that says I WILL CONTINUE,
    ▪ no matter what happens!

• Paul told the church in Romans:

Romans 11:22
Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, If thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

• Talking about the olive tree, which is symbolic of the people of God,
  o Paul says that if we don’t continue in the goodness of God
    ▪ we will be cut off!
• You have to continue.
  o You have to keep putting one foot in front of the other.
    ▪ You have to keep pressing on.
    ▪ You have to keep standing fast.
  o Whatever you do, you must continue!

• Listen to Galatians 3:10:

Galatians 3:10
For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, **Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written** in the book of the law to do them.

- My goodness!
  - It doesn’t get any more plain.
    - If you fail to continue in this thing,
    - if you fail to keep on keeping on,
      - you join the ranks of the cursed!
- Perhaps that’s why Paul told Timothy:

  1 Timothy 4:16 *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

- Continue!
  - For in so doing you will save yourself and those that hear and see the testimony of your life!
- Continue.
  - Somebody in this place tonight needs to make up your mind
    - that you are done nibbling around the edges,
      - it is time to sell out, the whole route,
      - and completely follow God!
- When you stand before the throne of God,
  - he’s going to be concerned with more than just an experience that you had in an altar somewhere,
    - it’s going to be about more than just the question of the plan of salvation.
- Let me tell you what the judge of your soul wants to know:
  - Did you continue?!?!?
- The words you are striving to hear are:
  - Well done my good and **FAITHFUL** servant.
    - Faithfulness.
    - That means you continued!
    - That means you pressed on!

**Continue On**

We live in trying times.

- The darkness of our day does everything it can to drown out the light of truth.
  - In a society where truth is relevant,
  - where tolerance is the new religion,
  - where everyone just wants to get along
  - and it is considered both rude and offensive to believe in divine absolutes,
    - it is more imperative, now, than it ever has been
• that we, the church, continue steadfastly!
  • Its not always going to be easy,
    o its not always going to be comfortable,
      ▪ sometimes you are going to face questions that you can’t answer,
      ▪ sometimes there will be struggles that almost overwhelm you,
      ▪ sometimes you are going to walk the lonely valley and
      ▪ sometimes the world is going to leave you for dead in the streets
        • but we are the church.
    o We carry the legacy of that stubborn, persistent community of believers
      ▪ that was born in an upper room on the day of Pentecost
        • and we can’t afford to let up now!

• Paul said in Hebrews 12:

**Hebrews 12:1**
1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

• What he’s saying is, it is our turn now!
  o They continued on, steadfast.
    ▪ They never wavered and never faltered.
      • And now they’ve put his thing in our hands.
  o Now we are encompassed with this great cloud of witnesses.
    ▪ We carry the legacy of the church of the ages.
      • From the upper room to now, the chain is unbroken.
• In every generation the true believers have continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine!
  o The power of continuity stands behind the church
    ▪ and it is our turn,
    ▪ this is our moment...
      • Let us lay aside every weight!
      • Let us lay aside every sin that so easily plagues us.
      • And let us run with patience,
      • let us run with endurance,
      • let us continue in the race!

The history of the church is fully invested in your life.
• The continuity of truth through all the ages of time is fully invested in this church.
  o It high time that we recognized where we stand in the grand scheme of things,
the baton has been placed in our hands
  • and it is time to continue!

• Grand dad is watching and grandma too.
  o The saints of old are gathered around heaven’s portal
    • and let me tell you what they want to know.
• They want to know if this generation of apostolics has the same thing that they had.
  o They want to know if we are going to continue steadfast.

• As for me an my house,
  o as for me and my family,
    • as for me and my church,
      • let it ring from the heavens,
      • let a spiritual declaration be made –
        o We will continue steadfast.
• We are not going to turn to the left or to the right.
  o We aren’t going to water down this precious truth.
    • We aren’t going to drop the ball in this generation.
      • We will continue!

Close
There is a story told in the pages of history about Napoleon at Waterloo.
• Surveying the battlefield, and recognizing a looming disaster,
  o that tough little general turned to his drummer boy and said,
    • “The English are standing firm.
    • The Old Guard is making no progress.
    • We are defeated.
    • Sound the retreat.”
• Hesitantly, the lad looked up at his general and quietly said,
  o “Master, in all our campaigns,
    • I have never learned how to sound the retreat.”
• The heart of Napoleon was so touched
  o that he said,
    • “All right then, drummer boy, sound the charge.”

Some of you feel overwhelmed.
• Some of you have been through quiet a struggle.
  o Some of you are weak
  o and some of you are weary.
• But listen to what your pastor is telling you tonight:
  o When you don’t know what else to do... Sound the charge.
  o When you don’t know what else to do... Press on!
  o When you feel like tossing in the towel,
    • that’s when you need to stand firm
    • and purpose in your heart
There is power in continuity.

- Someone is watching your life right now.
  - Someone is waiting to see how you are going to handle this latest trial and tragedy that has overtaken you.

- Let me tell you where the power of your testimony is.
  - The power is in continuity.
    - It’s in standing fast,
    - pressing on,
    - continuing in the Lord,
      - no matter what happens!

- I wonder tonight if someone would be willing to step out by faith and make a spiritual declaration,
  - Devil you’ve given it your best shot but I’m still standing!
    - And I will continue!