We Still Continue

Acts 2:42
42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Psalm 27:13
13 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Introduction:
• Tonight I want to visit again the text that we addressed at the beginning of this year.
  o We started the year with the declaration that this year we would continue in some very specific things.
    ▪ We have tried, through the first five months of this year
      • to hold fast to our emphasis
      • on these critical components
      • of the apostolic church of the first century.
  o We have emphasized doctrine in our teaching.
    ▪ We’ve been unpacking the book of Romans
      • and the incredible message of justification by faith on Sunday morning
    ▪ and we’ve had an extended series of lessons
      • on Old Paths for the New Year in our Wednesday night Bible class
    ▪ as well as good godly instruction
      • to our men and women in our monthly breakout sessions.
  o We’ve continued with our emphasis of godly fellowship.
    ▪ through our meal and message fellowships
      • as well as our monthly family game night.
  o We’ve answered the call to prayer
    ▪ in our family prayer meeting
      • and I am thankful for each family
        o that has participated in those powerful meetings.
    ▪ We continue to endeavor to put a greater emphasis
      • on both pre-service prayer
      • and life changing altar services.
  o We’ve answered the call to share with our community
    ▪ through our affiliation with
      • the Northeast Arkansas Food Bank.
    ▪ Twice a month we deliver food boxes
      • to needy senior citizens in our community.
We are doing our best to maintain a good name in our community
  • and to continue in the things that have brought us to where we are.

But that continuity is not without struggles
  o and our enemy,
    • in spite of our renewed effort
    • to truly live as disciples of Jesus Christ,
      • has not backed up or backed down.
  o Our families have seen struggles
    • that we never imagined at the beginning of the year.
      • We’ve faced battles on many fronts.
  o For some your workplace
    • has become more unstable this year
      • than it has ever been before.
  o For some your finances
    • have suffered setbacks
      • unlike any you’ve encountered previously.
  o For some your relationships,
    • the bond between husband and wife,
      • or even the relationship
        o with your children or parents
      • has been strained to the limits.
  o Some have faced health concerns
    • that they never dreamed of at the beginning of the year,
  o some of us have even lost loved ones unexpectedly
    • and are now dealing with the emotional fallout
      • of such a traumatic loss.

Through it all we have continued.
  o Week after week,
    • you’ve gathered together in this house.
  o Service after service
    • we’ve seen the power of God
      • work in our midst.
  o And I feel led of the spirit of God
    • to come to this pulpit tonight
      • and declare to you
    • that God sees every struggle,
      • he is aware of every need,
      • he has been with you every step of the way
        o and his spirit calls us again tonight
          • to continue.
  o To hold fast to the promises of God.
    • To redouble our efforts as it were,
    • to turn again our hearts towards heaven
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• and renew our commitment to continue
  • in the way of the first century apostolic church!
  
  o We continue!
    • That is what got us here.
      • That is what brought us to this place.
    • And that is what will carry us on
      • to the fulfillment of God’s mighty promises in our lives.
      
      o We continue!

We Continue:
  
  • Three critical words
    
    o sum up the incredible momentum
      • of that first century church
      • in Acts chapter 2:
        • They continued steadfastly!
    
    o The verb for “continued”
      • has to do with “persistence”
    
    o and the word “steadfastly”
      • is directly related to “stubbornness.”
        • What a unique combination!
    
    o The two ideas are generally viewed
      • as opposite extremes of the same spectrum.
    
    o Both have to do with tenacity.
      • But persistence is often viewed in a positive light,
        • while stubbornness is viewed in a negative light.
    
    o One is seen to be a positive approach
      • and the other is seen to be a negative trait.
    
    o But here, in the second chapter of Acts,
      • the two ideas are combined
        • to describe the attitude of that first century church:
          • They continued steadfastly.

• They had a stubborn kind of persistence.
  
  o What a mix!

• One person said that persistence is “will power”.
  
  o Persistence says: I will!
    • I will live for God.
    • I will hold out until the end.
    • I will see my family saved.
    • I will make difference in my world.
    • I will have a personal revival.
    • I will hang on until I see the deliverance of God.
    • I will let God work through me.
      • I will!

• But the same man defined stubbornness as “won’t power.”
  
  o It says: I won’t!
• I won’t fail.
• I won’t give up hope.
• I won’t quit trying.
• I won’t let my faith go.
• I won’t succumb to the pressures and trials of this life.
• I won’t lose my joy.
• I won’t stop short of my final destination.
• I won’t silence my worship!
• I won’t lose out with God.
  • I won’t!

• But when you put the two together,
  o you get an incredible, powerful,
    ▪ God-anointed tenaciousness of the faith
      • that says at the same time:
        o I will & I won’t!
          o I will see the promises of God come to pass
            ▪ and I won’t stop believing it
              • no matter what happens!
          o I will see my family saved
            ▪ and I won’t stop praying for them
              ▪ and reaching for them
              ▪ no matter what my mortal eyes may see.
          o I will live for God
            ▪ and I won’t ever doubt his ability to save me,
              ▪ no matter what the situation in my life may be.
          o I will have a personal revival
            ▪ and I won’t let my circumstances discourage me.
          o I will make heaven my home
            ▪ and I won’t let anything in this world turn me aside.
          o I will rejoice in the God of my salvation
            ▪ and I won’t let this world rob me
              ▪ of the joy of my salvation!
    o I will & I won’t!

• “I will” is founded on will power alone.
  o It simply ignores the obstacles
    ▪ and ignores the enemy
      • that tries to destroy it.
  o It maintains the positive outlook
    ▪ that if God is for me there is none that can stand against me,
      ▪ no weapon formed against me shall prosper.
  o However, “I won’t” is the practical application
    ▪ of such lofty persistence.
  o It is founded on the understanding
    ▪ that there will opposition,
      • whether I acknowledge it or not.
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- It recognizes the trouble and heartache
  - that comes into my life,
    - but it refuses to be discouraged
      - or to be turned aside.
- It acknowledges the enemy
  - that tries to hinder my walk with God
    - but it refuses to relinquish its hold
      - on the promises of God.
- It recognizes that I have an enemy
  - that seeks to destroy me
    - but it understands that He that is in me
      - is greater than he that is against me.

- When you get “I will” and “I won’t”
  - pulling together for the same cause,
    - you get an extreme tenacity of the faith
      - that will not be turned aside!
- That’s the kind of incredible faith
  - that characterized the church in the book of Acts.
- This kind of faith says
  - I’m not just going to ask the Lord,
    - I’m going to seek after an answer.
  - I’m not just going to want something from God,
    - I’m going to knock until the door is answered.
- I’m talking about an importune kind of faith that says
  - I’m going to keep praying
    - until I get my answer.
  - I’m going to keep climbing
    - until I stand on the mountaintop.
  - I’m going to keep pushing
    - until I break thru!
  - I’m not just going to talk about revival,
    - I’m going to give myself to it.
  - I’m not just going to believe God for an influx of souls,
    - I’m going to go out and invite someone to church.
  - I’m not just going to claim the promises of God,
    - I’m going to walk in them,
      - taking each step by faith!
    - It is a certain tenacity of faith that will not be denied.
      - It is the kind of faith that moves the very hand of God!
        - It is a persistent, stubborn, kind of faith!

- Persistence says that the journey of a thousand miles
  - begins with a single step,
    - so I will take that step.
- But stubborn persistence says
  - that the a thousand mile journey
• takes all the steps that it takes,
  o so I will keep on walking
  o no matter what happens!
  o Because stubborn persistence recognizes
    ▪ that the thousand-mile journey
      • may take more than a thousand miles to complete.
  o There may be some setbacks on the way,
    ▪ but I’m going to keep walking.
  o There may be some obstacles that I have to go around,
    ▪ but I’m going to keep going.
  o There may be some rivers that need crossing,
    ▪ some mountains that need climbing,
    ▪ some valleys that must be crossed,
      • but I will not be turned away!
  o I will reach my destination
    ▪ and I will not give up.
  o Nothing in this world can turn me around.
    ▪ I’m talking about the kind of faith
      • that declares, loud and long,
        o nothing in this world
        o can turn me around!
• So often our faith is a tender thing,
  o so easily turned aside,
    ▪ so easily discouraged.
  o We start out well.
    ▪ We respond in faith
      • to the promise of the word of God
    ▪ but then troubles come
      • and obstacles arise
      • and we lose our grasp
        o on the tenacity of faith.
  o We get stalled and our progress is halted.
    ▪ If you find yourself in a place
      • where you’ve lost the momentum
        o that you started the year with,
    ▪ I’ve come to call you out of that place tonight.
      • There is a spirit of revival in this house.
      • There is a spirit of renewal working in this place.
  o God wants to revive your soul,
    ▪ God wants to anoint you with new purpose,
      • with fresh anointing
      • with a renewed passion
        o for the plan and purpose
        o of God in your life!
  o I pray to God, tonight,
that he would awaken that stubborn persistence
• of the first century church in our lives!

That tenacity of the faith that simply say:
• I will not give up!

Unless...
• The psalmist, in the 27th Psalm
  o gives us a picture of the soul
    ▪ that is both faced with the struggles of this life
      • and gripped by the stubborn persistence of faith.
  o In a broken utterance
    ▪ of deeply emotional feelings
      • the Psalmist first declares
        o the weakness and frailty of his soul...
          ▪ I would have fainted.
          ▪ I would have lost heart.
  o I was on my way to the promise of God,
    ▪ I was on my way to claim, by faith,
      • that which was mine,
    ▪ but life happened somewhere along the way
      • and I almost fainted.
        o I almost lost my faith.
        o I almost stumbled.
        o I almost gave up.
• Perhaps there are some here tonight
  o that started your journey this year full of faith
    ▪ with the expectation that you would grow closer to God
      • that you would experience a personal revival,
      • that this church would finally break through,
      • that revival would be poured out,
      • that you would receive the promises of God in your life.
  o But, somewhere along the way,
    ▪ life has happened to you.
      • Circumstances have arisen against you.
  o Problems,
    ▪ toil,
    ▪ trouble
    ▪ and heartache
      • have been your constant companions on this journey
        o and, if you would be honest tonight,
          ▪ the stubbornness has gone out
            • of your persistence.
  o You are still hanging on,
    ▪ but just barely.
      • You’ve almost fainted.

Notes by Pastor Tony McCall
The Pentecostals of Lake City
Your “I will”
- has become “I might”
  - and your “I won’t”
    - has surrendered to “I shouldn’t”.

But I’ve come to this pulpit
- to tell you that God hasn’t forgotten you.

He knows right where you are
- and He knows what you are going through!

He is here tonight to strengthen you,
- to revive you,
- to renew you,
  - to anoint you
    - with a fresh anointing!

You need to lift up your eyes to the heavens
- because that’s where your help is coming from!

You need to call on the name of the Lord
- because he’s getting ready to revive you
  - in this place tonight!

First we saw the frailty of the human soul
- but then we see the strength of faith.
  - I would have lost my way along the way,
    - unless I had believed.
  - I would have fainted,
    - unless I had believed.
  - I would have given up,
    - unless I had believed.
  - My faith would have been broken,
    - unless I had believed!
  - I never would have made it,
    - unless I had believed.
  - Somebody needs to believe tonight!
    - Somebody needs to stir up your faith
      - in this house tonight!

The devil wants to steal your praise.
- The devil wants to steal your worship.
  - The devil wants to take away your shout.

For some of you its been so long since you shouted
- that you can’t even remember
  - the euphoria of surrendering everything to God,
    - of letting faith take over,
    - of lifting your eyes towards heaven
      - and saying Jesus take the wheel!

The devil wants to rob you of that tenacity of faith


- that keeps you going.
  o But you need to stir yourself tonight.
    - You need to make up your mind,
      • I will worship him,
        o no matter what I face.
      • I will praise him,
        o no matter what I’m going through.
  o I will shout unto the lord
    • with the voice of triumph
      • no matter if I feel that triumph or not in my life!
  o Because I would have fainted
    • unless I caught a glimpse
      • of the glory of God.
  o Some of you need to lift up your eyes tonight
    • until you see god in all of his glory!
  o Let me tell you something,
    • you can praise your way
      • out of your valley!
  o You can praise your way
    • out of your depression.
  o You can praise your way
    • out of the oppressive circumstance
      • that has tried to destroy you.
      o Your praise turns your faith loose!
  o The more you praise him,
    • the more you believe
      • that all things are possible with him,
        o and the more you believe that
          • the more you praise him!
- There is a reviving power in faith.
  o Faith brings new strength
    • and fresh grace from heaven.
      • Faith renews you.
      • Faith restores you.
  o I’ve come to challenge you tonight
    • to stir your faith again.
  o To dare to believe again
    • that God will do what he said he would do.
      • He didn’t bring you this far to abandon you.
      • He didn’t make you a promise
        o only to leave you disappointed.
  o When faith is stirred up,
    • the fire begins to burn a little brighter.
  o When faith is stirred up,
    • the vision becomes a little clearer.
When faith is stirred up,
  ▪ the promises of God hover within your reach.
It’s high time you stirred your faith,
  ▪ It’s high time you made a conscious declaration:
    • God I don’t know how,
      o and I don’t know when,
      o and I don’t know where,
        ▪ but I BELIEVE you will!!!
    ▪ I believe you will bring me through.
      • I believe you will cause your promise to come true.
      • I believe you will deliver me out of the hand of my enemy.
I believe!
  ▪ That belief is what fuels
    • that stubborn persistence of my faith.
      o I believe!

Come on somebody.
  o We still believe.
    ▪ Though the journey has been hard,
      • we will confess your goodness God.
We still believe!
  ▪ Lift your voices together.
    • Say it with me:
      o We Still Believe!
      o We Still Continue!

Close
  • This evening I fell led to call this church to a special season of dedication.
    o For the next 28 days
      ▪ we will enter into a season of sacrifice
        • that we are calling “28 Days Of Devotion.”
    o Sometimes, in the course of the journey,
      ▪ we lose track of where we are going.
    o If we are not careful
      ▪ we can lose the vision along the way.
    o I believe it is time
      ▪ to turn ourselves again,
        • in a concerted effort,
          ▪ towards a renewal of both our passion
            ▪ and our purpose.
    o It is time to lift our hearts towards heaven
      ▪ and cry out:
        • Revive us, oh Lord!
  • 28 days is 4 weeks.
Beginning tomorrow on Monday
- and ending on the last Sunday of this month
  - in our 2:00 Fifth Sunday service
  - we will jointly ask God
    - to help us continue in what we have started.
We want to ask God
- to renew our sense of unshakable commitment
  - to the cause of Christ.
We want ask God to stir us up again
- in the power of the Holy Ghost.
We want to ask God
- to help the church to truly be
  - what the church is supposed to be!
We want to lay a fresh sacrifice on the altar
- and continue to believe
  - for an apostolic revival in Lake City!
  - We believe.
    - We still believe.
    - We still continue!

This is what we are asking:
- Each family will receive a prayer guide.
  - In it you will find 4 pages
    - with scripture passages on them,
      - one for each week.
  - We are asking for four things from you.

First
- we want you meditate
  - on the scripture passage for the week
    - each day of the week.
- You will read it seven times.
  - You will meditate on it each time.
- Set aside a few moments in your day
  - to thoughtfully contemplate the word of God.
    - Let it speak to you.
      - Every day.
      - For seven days in a row.
- Let God speak to you through his word!
  - You can read other passages as well each day
    - but we want the whole church to be
      - contemplating the same bible passages,
        - all week long together.
- Let's let God birth something within us corporately.
  - The passages have been selected
    - because they relate to the four things
      - that we said at the beginning of the year
that we would continue in.

- Let’s let God birth that in us.

- Secondly,
  - we ask you to set aside a personal prayer time
    - each day to pray for revival in Lake City.
  - Pray for personal renewal
    - and pray for the renewal of the body of Christ.
  - The church is not just an organization.
    - The church is not just a social group.
    - This is the body of Christ in our world!
  - Let’s prayerfully ask God to mold us
    - and make us into what he wants us to be.
    - Let us be the church in every way possible!

- Third,
  - we want each family to gather together
    - once each week
      - and read and discuss the bible passage together
      - then have a season of family prayer.
  - Family devotions are still a much needed practice in this day and age
    - and if we let them slip out of our culture as a church
      - it will cost us greatly,
      - let us gather our family together
        - for bible study and prayer.

- Finally
  - we are asking each individual
    - to fast one day a week during the 4 weeks.
  - Together, let us ask God to send us a revival
    - like we’ve never experienced before
      - and to renew that tenacious spirit of faith within us.
  - Let something rise within us that cries out:
    - I will and I won’t at the same time!
      - I will continue and I won’t be discouraged!

- It begins here.
  - It begins with us.
    - It begins tonight.
  - I’m asking the church to stand with me
    - and gather around this altar
      - and let us enter into a season
        - of prayer and praise.
  - First let us go before the throne of God
    - and beseech him to awaken us,
      - to revive us,
        - to stir up the gift of the Holy Ghost within us!
  - Then let us enter into a season of worship!
    - The devil has been trying to rob you of your joy.
• The devil has been trying to stifle your worship.
  o It is time to lift your voice,
    ▪ lift your hands
  • and declare in your worship:
    o I still believe.
    o I still continue!
• I will press on and I won’t give up!