

Hello, my name is Rich Beach and I'm a member here at Christian Life Church. During this season of fasting and prayer, God has shown how much I truly depend on Him. He has taught me that to be fruitful and free we must persevere. I would like to encourage you today to make a decision to persevere in fasting and prayer through your spiritual walk.

The Oxford Dictionary defines perseverance as: persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. Merriam-Webster says: continued effort to do, or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition: Steadfastness. Paul speaks about this in 2nd Corinthians 12:12 saying, "I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true Apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles." Paul was steadfast. He continued his effort to spread the Gospel and set up churches all over the world, despite difficulties, failure, opposition and persecution. He persevered to be the Apostle that God called him to be. Are you persevering to be who God called you to be?

The perseverance of Paul intrigues me. How did he do it? Not give into his flesh and just give up. Say, it's too much, I can't go on, my feet hurt, I just need to take a year off, this church is falling apart, I must not have what it takes, God chose the wrong guy, etc etc etc. Well, Paul writes in Romans 5:3-5 "Not only so, but we also glory in our suffering because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, character hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Wow, that is powerful. Suffering through perseverance reminds me of struggling with finishing something you started. Have you ever gotten to the point where you think it's not working or you get distracted, sidetracked or your attention is suddenly elsewhere. After time, you forget about it, and you are left with an unfinished project, and you did not achieve the goal you set out for. God does not intend our spiritual life to be like our unfinished project. He intended for us to stay in a continuance state of grace to a state of glory,

final perseverance. God wants to remodel those junk rooms in our hearts through his love.

Think of perseverance like running a race. Hebrews 12:1-3 says, "Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, consider him who endured such opposition, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." This scripture reminds of a video I once saw on social media. It was a collegiate relay race. Right from the start, one of the runners stumbled and fell. The rest of the runners were already a third of the way around the track by the time she got up. She could have given up, but she didn't, she knew the reward would be great if she just persevered. She ran so fast, she almost caught up to the rest of the runners. By the end of the race, they won by almost half a track length. Thank goodness we are not competing against each other to see who gets to the finish line first. Perseverance is the continuing pursuit of completion. I encourage you to make a decision today to persevere.

As we near the end of this fast, hold steadfast to your perfecter of faith, for you know where your hope lies. If you stumble, it's ok, get up and continue. If you are feeling under attack, praise God, because you are being persecuted for His name's sake. Will you make a commitment to God today, to die to your flesh more often through fasting and prayer? God desires an intimacy, a lasting, continual steadfast relationship. Ask God what may have distracted you, gotten in the way or took your attention off him. Lay those things at his feet, then persevere, set aside time throughout the year to draw closer to God through fasting and prayer, you will see the goodness of being fruitful and free in 2023.

Pray this with me: Heavenly Father, reveal to me anything in my life that is hindering me from an intimate relationship with you. I will be quick to repent and lay them at your feet. Heal and repair those places in my heart so that I can receive more of you. Give me strength to persevere and

increase my desire for your heart. I thank you, Father for your continuous state of grace that leads to a state of glory. Thank you for helping me to persevere and for drawing me closer to you as I abide in you through fasting & prayer. In Jesus' name, Amen! Have a blessed day!