

## ***The Power of Perseverance***

### **Lessons from Acts 20:1-12**

We are getting into the word of God so we can get it into our lives, so we can get it out of our lives, into the world around us. Today we're gonna be talking about the power of perseverance. We're gonna be looking into the book of Acts chapter 20, verses one through 12, and we're walking through the book of Acts together. We're growing together, looking at the early church, looking at the work of God. And this has been a great time.

to grow in our faith. And I wanna encourage you to share this with some others so they can get into it as well. And I wanna begin by talking about this book by Chip and Dan Heath. They wrote a book called *The Power of Moments*. And they described this experiment where the participants went through three painful trials. In the first experiment, they submerged one of their hands for 60 seconds.

In a bucket filled with very cold 57 degree water. In the second trial, they increased the time to 30 by 30 seconds. So, so a minute and 30 seconds. And for the first 60 seconds, the water was still 57 degrees, but in the final 30 seconds, it was raised to 59 degrees. And in both these trials, the participants weren't told how long the experiment was going to last.

And before their third and final bucket of water, they were asked if they would want to repeat the first experiment or the second experiment. And 69 % of them chose the longer trial. Now think about that for a second. In both of the trials, their hand was placed in this freezing water. And the second trial was 30 seconds longer and only slightly

less uncomfortable in the last 30 seconds. More than two out of three people wanted to do the second trial. And the reason why is that psychologists tell us that when people think through their personal experiences, they are rating their experience based on its best or its worst part. And that is the peak. The

and the ending and they call it the peak end rule and people will remember us at our best and at our worst and they remember the way we end much more than the way we begin and so it's important that we finish strong. We can't always be at our very best. Our worst selves will sometimes slip out no matter how hard we try to hide.

that part of ourselves, but we can have some control over how we end. And we need to devote more time and attention to getting the end right. And right now you may be average by most standards with all the highs and lows of your life. But if you make a concerted effort to end well as you encounter people, as you engage with people,

you will leave them with a good impression. There are no second chances for making a good impression, but there's always the chance to end well. And so we're going to be talking about persevering today as we look in Acts chapter 20 beginning in verse one, we see that that Paul's missionary journey continues as he's going around strengthening churches and sharing the gospel. And this passage starts with

Paul leaving Macedonia and going to Greece where he spent three months in ministry with the believers there. And from Greece, he goes to Syria. He was planning to stop in several cities along the way. And one of the noteworthy stops on Paul's journey is in Troas, a coastal city in Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. And Paul and his friends stay there for a week.

and the believers get together for fellowship and worship on the first day of the week, they come together to break bread or to really, they celebrate the Lord's Supper together. And this is a picture of their unity in Christ. As they got together one night in an upper room, this young man named Euticus, he seated really on the windowsill,

and he falls asleep and he falls out of the window and dies. But then miraculously, Paul goes down, embraces him and says, don't be alarmed, he's alive. And everybody is amazed as Eudicus comes back to life. We see the power of God at work here. And after this incredible event, Paul continues throughout the night to encourage and teach these believers.

until morning and with the break of dawn, Paul leaves on his journey and the believers are all filled with encouragement. They know that God is there, that God's power is at work among them. And so this passage really reminds us of the faithfulness of God and His power, even through those hard, difficult times, even through the times of uncertainty, it shows us.

the importance of coming together as a community of believers, as a family and as a fellowship, sharing together, worshiping together, eating together, celebrating communion, witnessing together. And the miraculous resurrection of Eutychus reaffirms the assurance that God is present and God is at work with his people. So let's first look at the power of persistence.

And we're going to read verses one through six. It says, when the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed for three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him, just as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia and he was accompanied by

Soprador, son of Pyrrhus from Berea Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, Antichicus and Trofimius from the province of Asia. By the way, just as a side note, when you're having to read Bible names out loud, one of the

things that you do is you just read them hooked on phonics work for me, you read them confidently.

And nobody else knows how to pronounce these names either. So you just say it and you keep pressing forward. All right. In verse five, these men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas, but we sailed from Philippi after the festival of unleavened bread. And five days later, join the others at Troas where we stayed seven days. And, you know, every believer, every minister, every everyone must consider the good.

of the church family above everything else. Paul wanted to minister there in Ephesus for a longer period of time, but he knew that he had become the center of controversy and it would be better for the church overall if he left. And he put the good of the church together above his own desires. And as someone who is serving in the church, and that goes, we believe that every minister...

Every member is a minister, every Christian has a ministry. And so how should we serve? We serve faithfully, quietly, consistently. And with Paul's life in ministry, there's a lot of things we don't know about his life because he just faithfully, consistently served. And if it weren't for Luke, the author of the book of Acts, we wouldn't know a whole lot about his life.

because Paul doesn't talk a whole lot about himself in the letters to the churches that he wrote throughout the New Testament. He

was a faithful, unassuming servant of God. He didn't just promote himself. He wasn't promoting his own efforts. He was promoting Jesus. And his heart was for one thing, and that was reaching people for Christ. And so...

This was the attitude of all of the servants and ministers in the early church. Even Luke, who was helping Paul, he doesn't glorify Paul, but he glorifies Jesus as the source of Paul's strength and all that Paul was able to accomplish. And so there's this way that we serve as ministers that is not self -

promoting. We shouldn't be promoting ourself. Let God lift you up as you lift up the name of Jesus. And what happens in that is even our efforts that don't seem, we think, am I really accomplishing a whole lot? Yes, God uses your life to accomplish so much when you're faithfully consistent, saying yes to Him, doing those small things that He puts in front of you.

And one example we see of Paul serving behind the scenes, glorifying the name of God. We see this in these two verses. Paul's ministry here in Macedonia lasted almost a year and incredible things happened, but we don't know a lot about all of those things. We see that Paul suffered a serious illness while he was there. We see...

that he was waiting for Titus, that Titus had been sent from Ephesus to Corinth to work out the problems there and to deliver the letter of 1 Corinthians from Paul. And Paul began to preach

the gospel while he was waiting for Titus to arrive. And so we see several events that were taking place, but all of the events that happened, that wasn't everything.

That was everything we know. There was so much more. And so Luke said that Paul went into Macedonia and he encouraged and he taught. And so that's what we got to do. Take advantage of every opportunity to to encourage other people in their spiritual growth and their spiritual life to share the word of God and not to promote yourself, as I said, but honoring.

Jesus and Jesus alone. And so as you're reaching people, as you're encouraging people, what's going to happen? Well, one thing that happened to Paul was that he was facing constant threats. He did it courageously, but he did it in a smart way. And so we see how Paul was able to

to manage through that situation. Paul was constantly making disciples and he was connecting with others. He was helping them grow in the Lord. This is what Jesus called us to do. He said, we are to go and make disciples. And it can be discouraging when you're in the weeds with people and you're facing attacks on one end and you're trying to help people on the other side.

And many times, you know, we want to throw up our hands and say, I quit. This is too much. But even in those discouraging times, God gives us strength to endure. We see this by looking at the examples of not only those in the Bible that we see who endured

so much, but other people, other men and women of God in our world today. And we should count it a blessing to.

persevere through the trials, to stay persistent through the trials. And in order to do that, listen, we've got to cut out all the weights that are hindering us, as we're told in Hebrews, we cut out all those weights so that we can continue to make spiritual progress. And that means living faithfully lives of holiness for Jesus and focus on what God is giving us, that God is giving you strength.

to go on, He's giving you power to go on and we've got to rely and trust on His strength. We cannot work up enough willpower to maintain for the long haul. Willpower only lasts so long, but God's power sustains us. God's power keeps us going and going and going. So we see this here on the power of perseverance.

but also we see the power of community. We see this in Acts 20 verses seven through nine. Let's begin in verse seven that says, on the first day of the week, we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and because he intended to leave the next day, he kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus.

who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. And then when he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Now let's kind of look into this because we think, well, Paul was long-winded. Maybe he was not



the most interesting speaker, but what Paul was communicating was a very essential and very important. And it doesn't matter how.

I think we're so used to entertainment and being entertained and things being said in a way that keeps our attention. At some point, we gotta grow beyond that and we gotta say, you know what, I'm paying attention to this because it matters to my life and because I need to know not all information is entertaining. Some of it is just very important. And what Paul was doing, he knows he's gonna leave, he's trying to get out as much.

information as poor as possible to them so that they could apply it to their lives and we see how they came together for worship and so you know Paul was there in Troas for seven days he was there for one Sunday and you know Paul was tired himself he was exhausted he didn't take many breaks and so he didn't say hey I'm gonna go off and

just refresh and recover and stroll along the beach. And instead, he found a group of believers and he was he was faithful. And, you know, even when you're gone from your local church on vacation for us as a family, many times we find a place to go worship because that's just what we do. We enjoy being together with other believers. And so we will we will do that. But as.

Paul was preaching, he preached a long time. It was no one hour service and we're done. He took every opportunity he can and he

was preaching till late into the night. And so it's important, when you come to church, one of the ways, I'll just give you some tips. If you have trouble focusing in or staying awake, then that's on you. What you can do is you can...

bring something to take some notes on and write notes. I promise you, not only is it gonna keep your attention, but also, and when I'm saying write notes, take notes on what the pastor is saying and what you're learning. And as you do that, the time is gonna go by faster and you're going to have more retention of what you're learning. There's so many benefits to taking notes and staying attentive. But,

what happened as you know this guy his name was Uticus and you know he was drifting off. First what was he doing sitting there in the window on the first place in the first place three stories up okay. He was he put himself in a dangerous place he went to sleep he should have been listening he should have been learning and sometimes we miss we miss stuff our mind starts to drift on other things.

besides what we're supposed to be focusing in on when we're listening to a biblical message. We start thinking about other things and those distractions. And so we need to intentionally focus in. Now, the one who's writing this, remember in Acts, it's Luke, and he's literally, he's a doctor. So he's a physician and he says this boy was picked up dead.

And that means that he was examined, he was moved someplace, and he was dead. He was pronounced dead. He didn't just fall asleep and lightly land on the concrete. He passed away, he died. And so as we look at this, just this first, you know, this first part of this, I just want to remind you of the importance of getting together as

a family and the importance of gathering together. Their priority was on coming together in community. And the church is described in many ways, but it's described as a family. And whatever the early church did, we see what they did. They built community in the process. And a great way to build community, if you say, I'm a part of a church, but I don't have a lot of connections. Well,

There's some opportunities. Step into ministry. You grow together when you're serving in the trenches together. You grow together when you get into homes together in what we call connection groups, that you're getting together and you're growing together from the big parts of life to the little parts of life. We see the church does them together and it learns about who they are and learns about who God is. Being a part of a community is so important.

because it gives us the opportunity to be transparent, to be honest, to be authentic, to be vulnerable, to build people up while we are being built up ourselves. And in the process, we discover our God-given gifts and talents and we help others to do the

same thing. And we learn from people as they learn from us. And we see the big picture of who...

God is and what he's doing in the world around us and what he's doing in our lives. I heard this story here about some parents and other family members who were rejoicing, celebrating after a three-year-old survived a life-threatening scare. This reminded me of this story of Eudicus. And here's what happened. Police in Stanford.

responded to the Fairfield Apartments after onlookers reported seeing a small child fall out of a second story window overlooking a parking lot. And according to Stanford police, Sergeant Brian Butler, the child was found after she fell crying and.

moving around. She survived by landing in a patch of fresh mulch. And this was really impressive considering how high she fell. It was only a second story apartment, but the architecture of the property made it so that the window was more like four to five stories high. And Butler said that the girl was being attended to by two family members, one of which

had a partial disability, visual seeing disability. And so, you know, they investigated this and the child was taken to Stanford Hospital with non-life threatening injuries and she was listed in a stable condition. Imagine this happening, her falling but landing in a fresh pile of mulch. You know, thank God for that. But...

in this, we know that with God miracles are always possible. And where there is life and where there is growth, those struggles of life can always be turned to good. And especially when you infuse the power of God. And we see the power of God at work in this situation in Acts chapter 20, we look in verse 10, this says, Paul,

went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. Don't be alarmed. He said, he's alive. Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted. Paul, he went to the boy. He embraced the boy and, you know, symbolically, every one of us.

should throw ourselves on those who are lost in our world to bring the life that God can give them, like to share with them the message and the hope that only God can give. Paul continued, this did not stop them. In fact, this gave them a greater reason to worship and to grow. They fellowshiped all night long. They...

celebrated with the Lord's Supper. And this is just an incredible picture of fellowship between Christians together with this, you know, with Paul leading them. And it says so much to us about how we should interact and connect with each other as a family. This boy and his family and the church were all encouraged and strengthened.

by the fact that this young man was healed and they had a reason to celebrate. When the life of God is breathed into the life of a person, then there is a great reason to celebrate. When God...

gives you his strength and gives you his power. There is a reason to celebrate. Whenever you're burned out and tired, God wants to give you his power. When you're feeling like less than and you're feeling inadequate in your life, God wants to give you his power. God wants to give you his power so that you can handle the difficulties, the pain.

that you're going through. And the good news of today is this, you don't have to live a powerless, weak life. God wants to give you his power so that you can experience the fullness of joy and the promise of peace that comes from a life that is washed and made new by Jesus and fueled by the power of the Spirit of God in your life. And Paul understood,

God's power when he said I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and Philippians 4 13 Paul had the strength to face any condition in his life because he knew the power of Jesus and you may be thinking well God may have given Paul that power but I'm not feeling that power in my life. I'm just an average Christian. I love God but Really, I'm burnt out, I'm worn out, I'm tired, I'm stressed out. My kids are out of control. My heart is broken. My prayers, I don't see them being answered. I don't see God moving in my life. Well, God's power isn't just automatic. A lot of us as Christians, we live our lives powerlessly because we are not

plugging in. It's like a phone that is regularly draining. Life can drain you. We have to plug into the power source, plug into the power of God, seek Him, rely on Him and trust in Him, get into His Word, get around His people and allow His power to fill us. We open our hearts to Him and allow Him to fill us with His strength and His power. And He promises that that's what He's going to do in your life.

and in my life as we trust in Him. And we need that kind of power today at work. It is available to you as a follower of Jesus. You've got that power in your life. And so I just want to encourage you with that. And if you don't know Jesus because you've never opened up your heart in your life to Him and His forgiveness and His grace and His mercy, you can do that today as you put your faith and your trust in Jesus alone.

for salvation, He will change your life today. He will make you a new person from the inside out, make you part of His forever family and give you a great hope and a great future.