**TITLE:** PERSEVERANCE

**TEXT: Heb. 12:1-3; Gal. 6:9-10; James 1:12; Ro. 5:1-5; 2 Peter 1:5-9**

**INTRODUCTION:** This morning I want to talk about perseverance--Specifically the importance and even the necessity that perseverance plays in our life.

How are you at persevering?

A hobo knocked on the door of an English pub called "George and the Dragon." A woman opened the door. He asked, "Could I have a bit to eat?" The woman screamed at him and began to curse and malign him. Finally she slammed the door in his face. He knocked again and the woman opened the door. "Now," he said, "could I have a few words with George?"

You got to be persistent!

When you think of great American heroes such as Abraham Lincoln, what qualities come to your mind?

When you think about Abraham Lincoln what personal qualities come to your mind-- A man of Compassion? A man who was Concerned for the disenfranchised of his world? A man who was able to hold unto a good sense of Humor even in very difficult times?

While all of these characteristics certainly apply, I think that if we really knew Lincoln, we’d find that the overriding quality of his character would have been perseverance.

Believe it or not, Abraham Lincoln was a failure most of his life. In most every area of his life he experienced defeat.

As a young man, Lincoln ran for the State legislature and lost overwhelmingly! He then went into business and failed completely! He became engaged to a beautiful, loving young woman but she died. Lincoln then married a woman who was a continual burden to him, a thorn in his flesh.

Soon thereafter he decided to run for congress but lost decidedly! After that he tried to get an appointment to the US land office, but was turned down.

He then decided to run for the US Senate, but his competition pounded him into the ground! After all of these defeats, he decided to become vice president of the United States and was once again defeated!

Abraham Lincoln lost at nearly everything he tried until he ran for and won the presidency of the United States.

After a track record of discouragement and defeat like Lincoln’s most men would have simply given up and slipped off into oblivion somewhere.

What was the secret to Lincoln’s ultimate success?

Perseverance!

He persevered despite overwhelming discouragement and defeat, and because he persisted, he went on to become one of the greatest leaders this world has ever known!

Despite all the losses he suffered in life, in spite of all his failures in life, Lincoln was never a looser because he never quit, he never gave up!

Lincoln’s life brings to mind the words of an anonymous writer who once wrote: A quitter never wins, and a winner never quits!

How true these words are.. Someone who quits, who always gives up, always throws in the towel, will never win, but he who never quits, who always preservers through the obstacles of life will always end up a winner.

In June l955, Winston Churchill, who was then near the end of his life, was asked to give a commencement address at a British University. At this time he was physically infirm; he had to be helped to the podium. Then he held on to the podium for what seemed an infinite amount of time. He stood with his head down but then finally raised that great leonine head of his, and the voice that years before had called Britain back from the brink of destruction sounded publicly for the last time in history.

"Never give up. Never give up. Never give up." With that, Churchill turned and went back to his seat. It is said that there was a long silence, and then, as if one person, the whole audience rose to applaud him, because he was a man whose life and words were together.

Again and again throughout Churchill's political career, like Lincoln, he had known setbacks. Three times, his career apparently was over, he was sent off to oblivion, and yet somehow he had a sense that there was still something left after the worst.

Winston Churchill became the greatest war time leader that Great Brittan has ever had.

What was the ultimate secret to his success after so many seemingly personal failures in life? Perseverance! He never gave up!

How many here this morning have experienced failures in your life?

Possibly you have suffered so many failures in your life that you start to feel that defines what and who you are---a failure..

Well if personal failures is what defines who and what we are then Scripture is full of examples of failures.

Abraham failed the test of trust when he accepted His wife’s handmaid, Hagar, as a segregate to have a child with when God had already promised him a child with his wife Sarah.

Abraham failed the test of integrity when in fear for his life he introduced his wife Sarah as his Sister….

Isaac fails the same test of integrity as his father Abraham when Isaac tries to pass off his wife Rebecca as his sister when he fears a foreign king.

Jacob failed the test of integrity when he deceived his own brother Esau out of his birthright!

Talk about personal failures…what about King David?

He fails to go out with his troops for battle…In his newfound spare time he lusts after a married woman, commits the act of adultery with her and then as a cover up for his sin he even has her husband killed!

David had to feel like a failure as a Father! One son rapes a half-sister, her brother then kills his half-brother that had done it and then, years later this exiled son comes back and tries to take the kingdom away from his father David and then he ends up getting killed in the process.

Talk about things that would make you feel like a complete failure as a parent.

Peter had personal failures and was tempted to let those failures define himself didn’t he?

After Peter had denied Jesus the third time and the rooster crowed Peter felt like a complete and utter failure.

But he picked Himself up off of the ground and persevered and became a great impact for the Kingdom of God.

All of these examples of men and women from Scripture have something in common other then their failures, and that is, even though they messed up at times, even though they sometimes missed the mark, they never let their failures define who they were but they persevered through their trials and failures!

After talking about many of these very people in Hebrews Chapter 11 Paul goes on to say this:

**Hebrews 12:1 - 3 (NIV) 1Therefore, 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.  2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.  3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

How many of you have ever felt at times like a failure in your relationship with Christ? Felt like a failure as a Christian?

In some way you have missed the mark and fallen flat on your face and it has left you discouraged and depressed feeling like a complete failure to your Lord and in your faith..

I think it is to us when we find ourselves in this condition that Scripture is primarily speaking to here…

**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.**

Did you catch that?

**Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles…**

Do you realize that not everything that becomes a hindrance to us and entangles us in our walk of faith is a sin.

In fact, sometimes we can let good and worthwhile things become an entanglement to us as far as our faith goes.

I have known Christians that are so busy trying to do everything that they find themselves having little effect in anything and end up feeling depressed and discouraged because of it.

I have seen this played out within some families as well!

A mom or a dad will try to be all things to all people at all times within the family and it can eventually become something that will become an entanglement to their relationship with God as they start to put their family on a higher pedestal then they do the Lord. They actually allow their family to become a distraction from God and most often it seems that they will become depressed and discourage in their faith.

Now as a Christian we all have a God given duty to our families but we need to keep our priorities straight.

It needs to be God first, family second and everything else prioritized down from there.

When we place God first, place God even above our spouse and children, place Him above our jobs and careers, it will actually make us better in those areas of our life, not worse.

Pauls says… **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.**

Just the fact that we are admonished to run with perseverance tells us that life will not always be easy! If we are to persevere then there must be things that we will come against in this life that will require perseverance.

--James S. Hewett,

*Remember, if everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane. When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.*

So just what does it mean to persevere?

There are two Greek words that we often translate as perseverance in English

***pros-kar-ter'-ay-sis***

***persistency:*—perseverance.**

***hoop-om-on-ay'***

**cheerful (or hopeful) *endurance*, *constancy:*—enduring, patient continuance (waiting).**

**Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance--** run with persistency, run with a patient continuance---**the race marked out for us.**

Life is really like a race isn’t it?

As we talked about last week, the older that we get the more quickly time seems to pass for us.

We are all in a race. A race that started the moment that we were conceived and whose finish line is eternity.

And what Paul is telling us here is that in order to run this race of life and faith successfully we need to run it as a runner would run a race with the intention of winning the prize…. We must throw off anything that will hinder us from successfully reaching the finish line!.

One of my favorite “feel Good” movies is the movie RUDY.

All of his life people had told Rudy that he wasn’t good enough, not smart enough, not big enough!

Rudy, the son of an Irish immigrant coal miner, had one dream growing up…To attend Norte Dame and play football for the fighting Irish.

Rudy wasn’t very big in stature, was told again and again that he wasn’t good enough, wasn’t smart enough or big enough to ever have a hope of fulfilling his dream.

The movie RUDY is the true story of how this young man persevered through all of these tremendous obstacles and in the last minutes of the last game of his last year at Norte Dame, Rudy gets put into the game and his lifelong dream becomes a reality!

Rudy persevered and in the end his dream came true!

**He was able to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and he ran with perseverance…and won the prize of a fulfilled dream!**

Let’s talk a minute about the benefits or the rewards of perseverance!

This race of life that we have been called to run and run with perseverance has a prize waiting at the end of it for all who persevere and finish the race.

**Galatians 6:9 - 10 (NIV) 9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.  10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

There is a story told ..

In a far country lived a band of minstrels (singers) who traveled from town to town presenting music to make a living. Things had not been going well. Times were hard; there was little money for common folk to come to hear them sing, even though their fee was small.

Attendance had been falling off, so early one evening the group met to discuss their plight. "I see no reason for opening tonight," one said. "To make things even worse than they may have been, it is starting to snow. Who will venture out on a night like this?" "I agree," another disheartened singer said. "Last night we performed for just a handful.

Fewer will come tonight. Why not give back their meager fees and cancel the concert? No one can expect us to go on when just a few are in the audience." "How can anyone do his best for so few?" a third inquired. Then he turned to another sitting beside him. "What do you think?" The man questioned was older than the others. He looked straight at his group. "I know you are discouraged. I am too. But we have a responsibility to those who might come.

We will go on. And we will do the best job of which we are capable. It is not the fault of those who come that others do not. They should not be punished with less than the best we can give."

Heartened by his words, the minstrels went ahead with their show. They never performed better. When the show was over and the small audience gone, the old man called the others to him. In his hand was a note, handed to him by one of the audience just before the doors closed behind him. "Listen to this, my friends!" Something electrifying in his tone of voice made them turn to him in anticipation. Slowly the old man read: "Thank you for a beautiful performance." It was signed very simply--"Your King." And with it was an invitation to come and perform at the palace in front the royal family and heads of state!

There is an old saying that I really like….

Heaven and earth will one day pass—only what’s done for Christ will last.

And it is because of this fact that Paul says…

**9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**

For the Christian, perseverance, especially perseverance motivated by our faith in Christ, will always pay dividends.

Will always have its reward! If not received in this life we will certainly receive it in the next.

**James 1:12 (NIV) 12Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.**

Scripture is full of examples of those who have walked this walk of faith before us, some who have faced many overwhelming trials and tribulations and the thing that sets them apart as ultimate success stories is perseverance.

They persevered in their personal lives and they persevered in their faith.

Do you want to know the secret of perseverance? Do you want to know how to persevere in life?

Embrace Jesus! Come to Him with a surrendered heart and simply lay yourself at His feet! Offer yourself to Him..

Allow Him to fill you with His presence, fill you with His Holy Spirit and you will have all of the perseverance that you will ever need in life.

**Romans 5:1 - 5 (NIV) 1Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  2through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.  3Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;  4perseverance, character; and character, hope.  5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**

Even in our times of trouble, even in our times of suffering as a Believer, one who has been sanctified and set apart unto the Lord, we can persevere because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

As we hold fast to Him, depend and rely entirely upon Him for our source of strength we can even come to the place of rejoicing in our sufferings **because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, produces character; and character, produces hope.  And hope will never disappoint us.**

James tells us the same truth in:

**James 1:2 - 4 (NIV) 2Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,  3because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.  4Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

Are you allowing perseverance to finish its work within your life this morning so that you will be mature and complete, not lacking anything?

Is it your desire to be effective in your life as a Christian? Effective for the work the Lord has called each of us to….

To reach a lost world with the message of Jesus and lead them to Christ?

**2 Peter 1:5 - 9 (NIV) 5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;  6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;  7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.  8For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Perseverance is listed among the necessary qualities we must embrace if we are going to have an effect for Jesus in our life and in our world!

Is it your desire this morning to be effective for Jesus?

Effective for Him in your own life. Effective for Him within your family and to your friend and effective for Him within your world?

Receive Jesus, Embrace Him with the entirety of your body, mind and soul, and then simply Persevere in your faith and you will become that effect for Him!