



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Class Series Notes

Perseverance: A Different Look

David Anguish

Spiritual Warfare

- Is a reality for believers (Ephesians 6:10-18)
- It is easier to begin the war than to stick with it over time.
- Perseverance is the mark of sustained growing faith that results in gaining victory in Jesus.
- Perseverance as described in our text (2 Corinthians 11) envisions a different set of problems and point of concern than many have in mind when they talk about persevering.



image source - <http://messiahnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/perseverance.jpg>

A Big Idea in the New Testament

Verb - *hypomenō*

1. to stay in a place beyond an expected point of time; remain/stay (behind). (e.g. Acts 17:4).
2. to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, *stand one's ground, hold out, endure*. (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:10, 12; Rom. 8:24; 12:12; 1 Cor. 13:7).
3. to wait for with persistence, *wait for*.

Noun - *hypomonē*

1. the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, *patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance*. (e.g., Rom. 5:3f.; 15:4f.; 2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:10; Tit. 2:2; 2 Cor. 12:12; Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 3:5; Rom. 2:7; 2 Cor. 1:6; Rom. 8:25).
2. the act or state of patient waiting for someone or something, *expectation*. (e.g., 2 Thess. 3:5).¹

Some key passages outside Paul: Hebrews 12:1-3; James 1:4, 12; 5:11.

¹ Definitions are from Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), BibleWorks. v.10.



Consider the places (and miles!) of Paul's travels

The Letter We Know as 2 Corinthians (A Review)

"The central theme of 2 Corinthians is *the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's apostolic life, ministry, and message*. In addition to calling into question Paul's motives in organizing a collection for believers in Judea (8:20-21; cf. 2:17; 12:14-18) and questioning his personal courage (10:10-11; 11:21), Paul's opponents had argued that Paul suffered too much to be a Spirit-filled apostle of the risen Christ. Paul argues that his weakness as an apostle is the very means by which believers are comforted (1:3-11) and God in Christ is made known in the world (2:14-17; 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23b-33). Paul's sufferings embody the cross of Christ, while his endurance amid adversity, with thanksgiving and contentment, manifests the resurrection power of the Spirit (12:7-10). Paul's suffering as an apostle is thus the very means God uses to reveal his glory (1:3-4, 11, 20; 4:15; 9:11-15; 10:17-18).

"Paul therefore sees a close tie between the Corinthians' acceptance of his apostleship and the genuineness of their faith. To reject Paul and his proclamation is to reject Christ himself, since Paul's message, ministry, and manner of life are one. This explains why 2 Corinthians is the most personal of all of Paul's letters, filled with deep emotion."²

² *The ESV Study Bible*, English Standard Version® (ESV®). Copyright © 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved. Bible Works v. 9 module. Italics are as they appear in the study Bible.

Paul Reports Some Trials

2 Corinthians 10-13 - Pre-context to 11:16-33

- Spiritual warfare: someone's out to get us (10:1-6; 11:3, 14-15).
- If anyone is confident (persuaded) he is Christ's, Paul has just as much confidence, even more so; this is so despite the criticism he was receiving from his detractors (10:7-11).
- Comparisons: right and wrong standards (10:12, 18).
- Humble boasting (10:13-17).
- Paul's aim, battle, and strategy are contrasted with the rhetorical standards of his detractors (11:1-6).
- A history of behavior toward the Corinthians that followed the suffering-to-glory example of Jesus (11:7-11).
- A direct charge against the "false apostles" (*pseudapostoloi*) (11:12-15).

2 Corinthians 12-13 - Post-context of 11:16-33

- Paul's humbling "thorn in the flesh" — "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
- An authentic, beneficial ministry that never took advantage of the Corinthians (the charges apparently were stirred by outside agitators) (12:11-18).
- A concern for "upbuilding" (v. 19) and earnest desire that sins will not continue in people who remained impenitent (12:19-21).
- A call for self-examination: a time of reckoning is coming (when he *will* show them his actions can be as bold as his letters!); Paul's aim was all about them (13:1-10).

Lesson Text - 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

- "... so that I too may boast a little ... as a fool..." (vv. 16-17).
- "Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. . . ." (vv. 18-21a).
- Comparing credentials (vv. 21b-23).
- More labors . . . imprisonments . . . beatings . . . near death experiences (vv. 24-28).
- Weakness? Yes! That had shown God's power in his life from the beginning (11:29-33)

A man wrote to his girlfriend, "Susie, I love you so much. I would climb the highest mountain, cross the driest desert, sail the most tempestuous seas. See you Sunday if it doesn't rain."

*Jimmy Haile, "Are You Committed?"
www.sermoncentral.com, accessed July 21, 2014*

Let's Talk About Perseverance

1. Read the list of Paul's labors, imprisonments, beatings, and near-death experiences again (11:23-29). In *your* service as a Christian in 21st century American culture, with how many of these experiences do you really identify? Does our distance from such experiences make it more difficult for us evaluate our perseverance in service to Christ?
2. Paul included among the trials he listed in 2 Corinthians 11 "the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (v. 28). Think about that in light of the criticism he had received — and the influence of his critics on the Corinthian church where he had done so much. Does discouragement at church ever affect our perseverance?

3. As he made his appeal in chapters 10-13: [a] Paul gave considerable attention to his suffering, weakness, and the like as proof that he was a true apostle of Christ. [b] He contrasted his life and actions [of suffering & weakness] with the "false apostles" (11:13) or "super-apostles" (11:5; 12:11). [c] He also said that he was every bit as much a Hebrew, Israelite, and offspring of Abraham as they were (11:22).
 - One criticism of his opponents implied by his argument is that they were neither motivated by nor imitating the suffering-Servant example of Jesus (see Mark 10:35-45), but had (at best) a selective kind of faith or one that had compromised with "the flesh" (see 2 Cor. 1:17; 5:16; 10:2-4; 11:18; compare Phil. 1:15-17).
 - His reference to Jewish identity claims (11:22) suggests that at least some of his detractors were associated with the Judaizers who hounded him from place to place (see Acts 15:1-6; 21:20-21; Phil. 3:2-6; etc.).
 - What impact does trying to live in two worlds ("the flesh" vs. "of the Spirit") have on our perseverance? Consider Mark 10:17-21 and texts like Col. 3:5 ("... covetousness, which is idolatry") in this regard.
 - What about the impact of our traditions? Are our customary ways ever impediments to faithful perseverance? Consider Mark 7:1-13 as you reflect on this.

Staying Engaged in the War

1. 2 Corinthians 10:1-6 brings us full circle to the idea of spiritual warfare (cf. Ephesians 6:10-18).
2. Paul models perseverance that never gives up, choosing the values of Christ (2 Corinthians 11).
3. Let us never give up.

The following is attributed to "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, who held the heavyweight boxing title for five years at the end of the nineteenth century.

"Fight one more round. When your feet are so tired that you have to shuffle back to the center of the ring, fight one more round. When your arms are so tired that you can hardly lift your hands to come on guard, fight one more round. When your nose is bleeding and your eyes are black and you are so tired that you wish your opponent would crack you on the jaw and put you to sleep, fight one more round — remembering that the man who fights one more round is never whipped."³

February 11, 2015

³ Michael P. Green, ed., *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 263-264.