

**“The Importance of Perseverance”** 8/18-19/07 6 p.m.; 9 & 10:45 a.m.  
Acts 13:13-52

### **PRAYER TIME**

Miners in Utah (6 trapped / 3 rescuers died, more injured)

Miners in China (180 trapped)

500 dead in Peru (earthquake)

Floods in N. Korea (300,000 homeless)

Spacecraft Endeavor’s re-entry (damaged heat shield)

Government of Iraq trying to re-group; a village wiped out in N. Iraq

Korean Christians being held hostage in Afghanistan

Harvest Crusade next weekend: F, S, Sunday

**OPEN** to Acts 13:13 (**PAGE** 1714)

### **INTRODUCTION**

At just 5-foot-10 and 202 pounds, **Walter Payton** was not a particularly big running back for the National Football League.

But during his career, he broke one of the sport’s greatest records. He rushed for 16,726 yards. During his twelve-year career, Payton carried the football over nine miles!

But, what really gets your attention, is realizing that he was knocked to the ground on average every 4.4 yards of those nine miles. But he kept getting up, and he kept getting up, and he kept getting up.

**William Wilberforce** was elected to the British Parliament in 1780. He came to Christ five years later, in part as a result of the ministry of John Newton, once a slave trader and then a pastor. Pastor Newton and others urged Wilberforce to investigate the slave trade and to fight for its abolition in Parliament.

Wilberforce was forcefully opposed by the slave traders, who had powerful allies in Parliament. But, he persevered year after year after year, for 22 years. And one month after his death, Parliament voted to completely abolish the slave trade.

About 2,000 years ago Jesus Christ gave us our marching orders, our mission. It's often called the Great Commission. He told us to make disciples of all nations ... to take The Message to every person in the world ... and to teach them to obey everything He had commanded.

And, He promised to be with us as we persevere with this most-important assignment.

The book of Acts is a record of how the first Christians tackled this assignment. We see that they took it with great seriousness, passion, and perseverance. They increasingly reflected God's desire that not even one would perish.

In the passage we're looking at today, we're going to see one of the most important qualities in taking the Message to all people ... the attribute of perseverance.

*For the Message to reach every person, we must...*

### **I. Persevere in Spite of Change** (v. 13)

#### **READ** Acts 13:13

##### **A. Persevere through changes in leadership** (v. 13a)

The change in leadership is so subtle, you might miss it. Prior to v. 13, Barnabas was always mentioned first. He was the leader.

- **Barnabas** had been a leader in Jerusalem and the key leader in Antioch.
- It was **Barnabas** who helped the apostles trust Saul following his conversion from persecutor of the church to preaching Jesus.
- It was **Barnabas** who recruited Saul to help him in establishing the church in Antioch.
- It is **Barnabas** who is listed first when the leadership team in Antioch is spoken of in Acts 13:1, and
- And when the Holy Spirit spoke to the leadership team in Antioch, He said, "**Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**"

But, from this point forward, the order is always “**Paul and Barnabas,**” except when they return to Jerusalem where Barnabas is still better known and trusted.

It appears that Barnabas has seen clearly the leadership gifts of Paul, and has asked him to take the lead. And to his credit, he remains on the team and does not view himself as “demoted” or “inferior.”

A Christian’s identity should *not* be in the role or position to which God has appointed him ...

because **roles** change, positions change, God’s direction changes.

But, our **identity**, being children of God, servants in the Kingdom of God, *never changes*. We serve in the areas of responsibility God has assigned until He has another assignment.

B. Persevere even when others quit (v. 13b)

John leaves Paul and Barnabas, returning home to Jerusalem. (John Mark [12:25] is a cousin to Barnabas).

We are not told why, but later in Acts, Paul clearly sees it as desertion.

Don’t let discouragement, anger, unanticipated difficulties, changes in leadership, etc., stop you from faithfully and continually sharing *The Message*.

Persevere until the mission is accomplished. Paul and Barnabas continue.

*For The Message to reach every person, we must...*

**II. Persevere with Confidence in The Message** (v. 14-43)

**READ** Acts 13:14-43

A. Paul establishes common ground (v. 16-22)

B. Paul shares The Message (v. 23-39)

Notice: *this is the same message that we still believe and still share with others!*

1. Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
2. How Jesus fulfilled OT Prophecy/God’s Word:

v. 23: line of David

v. 27-29: suffering Messiah

v. 33-37: resurrection

3. How Jesus paid for sin, and defeated sin and death (v. 38-39)

C. He calls them to decide for Jesus (v. 40-41)

D. And this is the same message we still speak today!

The Message doesn't change? *How can it!?!?*

It is rooted in prophecy, in history, in the Word of God.

This same Message has been changing people's lives everywhere it is proclaimed for 2,000 years ... and is still doing so today.

This message about Jesus is “... **the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...**” (Romans 1:16)

And this is why we can Persevere With Confidence in The Message!

## ILLUSTRATION

For many years now, Campus Crusade for Christ has been translating the “Jesus” movie into the various languages of the world. Just last month, they began showing it in the 1,000<sup>th</sup> language into which the movie has been translated.

1,000 languages!! And in every language and culture where this movie has been shown, people have entrusted their lives to Jesus ... from jungles to deserts, from cities to villages of mud huts ... from the highly educated to those who could not read or write ...

And now, they are pressing on. They have identified 500 more languages into which the movie has not been translated ... 500 languages where there are at least 100,000 people who speak that language ... and they are pressing on with this project because they know people will respond. God honors The Message about Jesus.

And that is just the beginning for those people ... they need pastors, teachers, evangelists, to continue the work in their language; so that they become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

And what we have seen over the past 2,000 years since Jesus died and rose again, is that regardless of

the span of years,

the diversity of cultures,

the multitude of languages,

from the Central Valley to downtown San Francisco,

from the Midwest to Wall Street,

When people hear about Jesus' death for our sins, and His resurrection from death that defeated the power of death and sin ... they turn to Him for forgiveness.

**This Message** is still transforming people's lives!

*We must persevere with confidence in this unchanging Message!*

I have had people tell me how they have prayed for a loved one for 5, 10, 15 years; even 20, 30 years, and more, before that loved one saw their need for Jesus and entrusted their life to Him.

I remember one man who was in his 80s or 90s when he asked Jesus to forgive his sins, and then began to follow Him by faith ... and he was a changed man!

*People are transformed* by the Message because Jesus is the only way to God. And when a person meets **the true God**, and He indwells them, they are changed, because they are taken from spiritual darkness into the light of God.

*They are transformed* because they are no longer slaves to their sinful nature ...

*They are transformed* because they no longer have to walk with the guilt and shame of the past ... because God has wiped out the penalty for the past and given a brand new start in life. That's why Jesus called it being **"born again."** A spiritual birth, a brand new start in life!

*We must Persevere with Confidence in The Message!!*

*For the Message to reach every person, we must...*

**III. Persevere in Spite of Opposition** (v. 44-52)

**READ** Acts 13:44-52

Many believed in Jesus, but the opposition grew to the point to where Paul and Barnabas were expelled.

Expect opposition ... Jesus said to expect it ... and rejoice in it when it happens.

**Matthew 5:11-12 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.**

**12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

Paul and Barnabas are expelled from this region. They knock the dust off their sandals, and they persevere! They go to the next city, Iconium, to tell more people about Jesus.

*They don't quit!* They don't lose confidence in the Message or in God's ability to save people!

They keep on going, knowing that God will use His powerful message to save even more.

### **ILLUSTRATION**

In 1999, Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons, Philip and Timothy, were murdered by militant Hindus. Their Jeep was set ablaze in an Indian jungle while they slept.

Before his death, Graham had worked with lepers in India, showed the *JESUS* film in various Indian languages, and translated the Bible into the Ho language, spoken by 1 million people.

Now, 8 years after Graham's death, the Ho language is the 1,000th completed language translation for The JESUS Film Project.

And they started showing it to Ho speaking people last month.

What if after Graham and his sons were martyred, Christians just backed off, pulled out, became discouraged, condemned all the Ho-speaking people because some from another group killed their Christian brothers?

Then, hundreds of thousands would never hear about God's love for them through Jesus Christ!

We must persevere in spite of persecution, insults, hardships. God is with us, and God is committed to the message about His Son.

### **CONCLUSION**

Are you persevering in taking the Message about Jesus to others?

Are you still praying for those who need Him?

Have you become discouraged? Afraid? Timid?

Let's lay all that before the Lord today and let Him replace it with His confidence, His forgiveness, His strength, His perspective, His love for lost and dying people.

Can we do that? Will you do that? Lay down whatever is in the way, throw it out!

*“Father in Heaven, I lay aside all the lies and distractions and feelings that keep me from believing and telling others that the Message about Jesus changes lives. Please forgive me, fill me with Your confidence, and open the doors for me to share freely this week! In Jesus' Name, Amen.”*