

It kept on going and going and going. In 1972 scientists launched the Pioneer 10 satellite to take pictures and provide other information about the planet Jupiter. One year later Pioneer 10 was sending pictures of Jupiter back to earth. The gravitational pull of Jupiter then sent the satellite into outer space at greater speeds. At two billion miles it passed Uranus, three billion it passed Neptune, four billion it passed Pluto. Like the Energizer Bunny it kept on going and going and going. It sent its information for over 30 years with a small 8 watt power transmitter.

The Apostle Paul was a man who kept going and going and going for Jesus. In the words just read to you, we hear him tell us, "We do not lose heart." What kept him going? It was Jesus and his resurrection from the dead allowed him to look at the past and realize his sin was forgiven. The resurrection gave him the power to look at the present and realize Jesus was with him. The resurrection allowed him to look to the future to be raised to life in the place that Jesus has prepared for us.

Here we are on this summer day in Florida. We share the same resurrection confidence that fueled the life of Paul. Amid all the troubles and difficulties of life we can join him in saying, Don't Lose Heart!

We don't lose heart. We keep going and going because with Paul we can look back and see how we have been rescued from a very terrible situation. Paul uses the words of Psalm 116 to reflect on the amazing rescue that took place in his life. He says, "It is written: 'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' With the same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak." In Psalm 116 the psalmist speaks of being delivered from the cords of death. "The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord; O Lord, save me." The Apostle Paul never forgot what it was like to be delivered from the cords of eternal death and punishment that were wrapped around him. He had to speak. He wrote,

"Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am chief." He thought of himself as the least likely candidate to be rescued by the Lord because he persecuted the church of God. Remember how he was traveling to Damascus to find Christians he could put to death. A bright light knocked him to the ground. A voice cried out, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me." In fear he asks, "Lord, who are you?" The voice spoke to him again, "I am Jesus." Those words "I am Jesus" were life changing. These words delivered him from trusting in himself for his salvation to trusting in Jesus.

We join Paul in saying "We believe, therefore we speak." With the psalmist we say, "The cords of death entangled me." Some babies are born into this world with the mother's umbilical cord wrapped around their necks. They need to be cut free immediately or they will die. You and I were born with the cords of death wrapped around us. There was no way we could escape being pulled down to eternal death and punishment unless Jesus came to rescue us. With the eyes of faith we believe Jesus did everything necessary to pay for every sin we have committed so we can be free. I cannot see the oxygen that surrounds me in this room, but I know it is there and it is keeping me alive. I cannot see with my physical eyes the death that Jesus died on the cross for my sin and his resurrection, but I see it with eyes of faith and it is real to me, and I want to speak about it.

If you could speak to Paul he would not be ashamed to tell you how the Lord also saved him from numerous tough situations in life. In the earlier part of this chapter he wrote of some of the challenges that faced him in life: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but now abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. He

says *"I'm hard pressed on every side, but not crushed."* I get pressure from every angle. I'm like the quarter back under the blitz. Everybody's coming at me, but I'm not crushed.

"I'm perplexed but not in despair." I don't understand everything that is happening in my life, but I keep on. Perplexed -- the Greek word there literally means stretched to the limit without breaking like a rubber band is stretched. He says, "I'm stretched to the limit but I don't snap."

"I'm persecuted" -- the Greek there means I'm hunted, hounded, *"but I'm not abandoned by God"*.

"I'm struck down but not destroyed" -- I'm like a boxer -- I get knocked down but I'm never knocked out. Paul's lifestyle shows great resilience. That's enough to make anybody want to quit! Yet he says "I don't give up". We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus might be revealed in our bodies."

What gave Paul the energy to keep going and boldly confess Jesus' death and resurrection? Paul knew that Jesus was alive and sitting on the right hand of his heavenly. Here is what he wrote as he faced the last days of his life on this earth as a prisoner in Rome: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom." We believe and therefore we speak. How many times has the risen Lord Jesus rescued you from tough situations that you faced in life? There were some days when you had so little strength that all you could do was cry out to the Lord, "Lord help me" or "Lord give me strength." The Lord delivered you. "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Paul was able to keep on going in life because he had a purpose. He says that we speak because, "we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence." God will raise us up on judgment day. He will present us to himself as his holy people, his saints and his beloved children who will spend eternity with him because of Jesus. Paul considered it such an honor and privilege to be involved in reaching out to people and bringing them to Jesus so they could be presented before the Lord on judgment day and not condemned to eternal death and punishment.

Why does the Lord leave us here on this earth? What purpose does he have for my life and your life? Early in this chapter Paul wrote, "We always carry about in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." I get to tell people about Jesus and so do you. So you and I experience real staying power, when we realize God wants to use our lives and example to influence others. If someone is drawn to Christ by my life and example, God is glorified, and my life on earth has had a real impact.

. 16 *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."* It's a fact that we are all outwardly wasting away. We're getting wrinkles, aches and pains, bifocals, baldness, bulges. What was once a shape is now a bulge. We're wasting away externally. How to know when you're growing older:

When you know all the answers but nobody asks you the questions.

When you look forward to a dull evening.

When you sit in a rocking chair and can't get it going.

When your knees buckle and your belt doesn't.

When your back goes out more than you do.

When you sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there.

We're all wasting away outside. Neither you nor I can stop the aging process. "But," Paul says, "you can stay fresh on the inside." He says, *"Though outwardly we are wasting away,*

yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." Paul was being renewed daily. He was being recharged every 24 hours. How was this internal renewal taking place? I know the things that renew me. What about you? Prayer renews me. Reading the Bible renews me. Taking a walk and reflecting on the goodness of God.

You need to know those things. The Bible says, *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint."* The Bible says in Psalm 119:50 *"Your promises renew me."* Get a promise of God and claim it. Hold on to it. If you're going to last you've got to make time for renewal in your life. That's one of the benefits of our small groups at Open Bible. They provide a renewal. Renew your life.

Paul's last secret deals with how to handle problems. v. 17-18 *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs the all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

You cannot develop perseverance or staying power in your life without problems. There is no such thing as perseverance without problems. If you don't have problems you don't need perseverance. The way you develop perseverance is in problems. That's what James 1:12 says. Problems produce perseverance. That's what Romans 5:3-8 says. Problems produce perseverance.

Problems are inevitable. They're a part of life. Jesus said, *"In the world you will have tribulation."* Life is tough. Life is a struggle a lot of the time. But the problem with problems is not the problem. The problem with problems is that they tend to cloud our perspective, our vision. We lose sight of our goal, our dream. We get our eyes on the problem and forget the whole ball game. We forget the overall picture.

Paul says, *"These light and momentary troubles..."* beaten five times, shipwrecked, imprisoned, sick, thrown out of cities, stoned -- then he says, *"light and momentary troubles..."* that's an understatement. How could he say all those things were light and momentary troubles? It's a matter of how you look at it. It's a matter of perspective. Paul's saying that the key to perseverance is perspective. Have a big view. Take the long look. Look beyond the problem and see God's purpose behind the problem. He says, we look at the eternal glory, we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. The most powerful motivation is eternal motivation. We look at the long haul. We look at the bottom line, what's going to happen. Paul says if I focus on my problems I'm overwhelmed but if I look in the light of eternity, they're insignificant.

What quitting point are you at? Some of you really feel like giving up. What are you tempted to give up on? Your career? "It's just not working." Your marriage? "We've had the same problems for fifteen years. Some people are tempted to give up on their health. Maybe on your children. What is your quitting point? Quitting points are made of paper. You've got to push through them. That's what perseverance is all about. Break through them and get your second wind. Regroup. Recharge.

Don't give up, give in. Give in to Jesus Christ. The most meaningless statistic in football is the half-time score. Who cares? As you know and I know anything could happen in the last two quarters. Things can turn around! And they often do! Don't look at where you've been; look at where you're going. The issue is not how you started in life, the issue is are you going to finish the rest. Don't give up! Focus your eyes on what is unseen. Amen....