

Resist The Exist Part 5

Persevere

Romans 12:12

Memory Verses: Romans 12:12

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

You ever have that nagging feeling that something isn't right or that there's something you need to do but you don't know what it is? A sense of urgency but you don't know exactly what for? I get that a lot. Especially when I'm doing my quiet time or praying or thinking about ministry in general. As a child of God I've been called to serve the needy, share the Gospel, be discipled and disciple others. And when I'm not doing those things I feel like I'm kind of just existing. Don't get me wrong, of course there should be time for having fun, watching a show or two, playing games with the family, or enjoying your favorite sports team. If God created it then it is a gift and it is good. But anytime those things become our life and take the place of serving the needy, sharing the Gospel, or discipleship... then Houston we have a problem.

The world defines living by how many worldly pleasures and experiences they can cram into their 72 years. The Bible clearly defines life a little differently. The Bible says really living is what you accomplish for Christ and his kingdom during your time here on this earth. It brings more clarity to the quote in Braveheart "all men die, not all men really live." If you want to really live... stop simply existing and live hard for Christ.

This morning I want to share with you another one of my favorite movie quotes from the Shawshank Redemption. Andy has been put through the ringer; his wife cheated on him, he was falsely accused of her murder, spends 20 years in prison as an innocent man, has his friend killed, and then is forced by the warden to cook the books or spend the rest of his life in the hole. And so after all of these hardships Andy and Red are sitting in the yard and Andy looks over at his boy Red and says... Red.. "get busy living or get busy dying." Christians... it's time to get busy living or get busy dying. **We can either determine right here and right now to live for Christ with our whole hearts as he's called us to, or the best thing we can do is simply move on, quit playing church, quit pretending to care about this thing called the kingdom, and retire from christianity all together. Because if you aren't living for Christ... you are simply existing... you are dying. You've gone from mediocrity, to apathy, and now you are facing fatality. Your two choices... get busy living or get busy dying! You can either adopt a mentality of going through the motions, running out the clock, and simply existing, or you can resist the**

exist!

For the past four weeks we've been looking at **Romans 12:9-13** as our guide to help us resist the exist. Let's read that passage again. We see 5 exhortations that will help us resist the exist. Hold Fast! Hold fast to good, and hate evil. Outdo! Outdo one another in love by loving others authentically, like family, like royalty. And as we saw last week, Remain! Remain passionate for the Lord in ministry, and in discipleship. We asked you last week to reevaluate your passion for the Lord? Hopefully some of you did just that. Is your passion for the Lord at a 1,2,5,8? Regardless of where it's at... what can you do right now to light the fire again and take it up a notch?

This week we are going to focus on **verse 12**. Our keyword here is Persevere! Hold Fast, Outdo, Remain, and Persevere. Sounds like a very good defense against existing doesn't it. Persevere, means to simply not give up; to be patient in tribulation. It's right there in the text. Throughout the Bible, God constantly calls us to not give up when things get hard. It's kind of like our signature move as believers. We love others genuinely and we have a hope that perseveres through hardship. But of course it's easier said than done. When things get hard... our first response is usually to shelter up and try to survive... to keep existing. We say.. okay I didn't sign up for this so I'm out. But that mentality is not for us... if we are to resist the exist we must persevere.

So how exactly can we persevere, how can we be patient in tribulation? This morning our verse gives us three ways we can be patient in tribulation and not give up. And what we will see is... **If God has never given up on you, how could you ever give up on Him?**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first way we can persevere is... **Remember That God Has Not Failed You Yet**. The verse says to be patient. Meaning... take a deep breath and wait on the Lord. **Psalm 27:14** tells us to wait on the Lord and let our hearts take courage. **Isaiah 40:31** says that those who wait on the Lord will eventually run. Waiting on the Lord is not a passive state of sitting on our hands, twiddling our thumbs, and staring at the wall. Waiting on the Lord means that, while we wait for him to come through for us, we continue doing what he's told us to do. We keep moving forward while we wait.

Psalm 130:5-6 tells us that while we wait we are to wait in his word. So as we wait upon the Lord it is expected that we will be in the Word dedicating ourselves to his precepts. And, **Lamentations 3:25** says that the Lord is good to the soul who seeks him while they wait on him. It's simple; while we patiently wait for God we seek Him in his Word and our souls will be set at ease. The goodness of God will give us peace in our souls as we wait on him. And just how does the Word set our minds at ease while we wait upon the Lord? Because the Bible is filled with story after story of God's

faithfulness.

Story upon story God shows that he has faithfully come through for his children. Abraham & Sarah waited for a child for 25 years and they nearly gave up, but eventually Isaac was born. Moses waited for 40 years to see the promised land, but then at age 120, right before he passed away, God let him look upon Canaan. David was anointed as king when he was around the age of 15 years old... but he waited another 15 years to be king while he was hunted through the wilderness by Saul. And the world waited years and years after the prophet Malachi last prophesied of the coming messiah... but 400 years later God literally came through in the birth of Jesus. Time and time again God has always fulfilled his promises. **As we wait upon God, as we wait in the word, we are reminded that God always comes through in the end.**

Joshua 21:45 reminds us that not one word of God's promises has ever failed. When God promises something, he is a man of his word. This makes it easier for us to wait upon the Lord. When we realize that he has never failed... it assures us that he will never fail. He's never let us down, he's never given up on us. If God has never once given up on his children... why would we in our trials ever give up on him or his mission? Why would we ever choose to simply exist. We can't. **If God has never given up on you, how could you ever give up on Him?**

Secondly... you can persevere when you... **Rejoice That God Will Not Ever Fail You**. The verses tells us to rejoice in hope. The point being... if God has never failed, never broken a promise... then he will never fail. Our hope isn't without merit or blind faith. We hope in what we know to be true from past experience or what the word says. **Romans 8:24-25** tells us that we hope for what we don't see... but we hope for it with patience because it is a sure hope grounded in truth. **Psalms 39:7** Why do I wait? For my hope is in you. You can have a sure hope in the Lord... he will come through... he will not fail.

But, you say, I don't understand. Bad things will still happen to me. Bad things have happened to me. I will eventually get sick and I will eventually die, or someone I love will get sick or die. So at some point God will fail me. Have you ever thought this way? If so, we must change our mentality.

As believers we must know what it means for God to fail us or not. And to know that... we must evaluate what our chief goals are. What exactly is our purpose in this life? John Piper answers that question the best in my opinion. He says, "man's chief aim is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." So, follower of Christ... your chief aim is not to be healthy, safe, and alive. I know that these are prized in our society and they can still be high on your list... but they aren't on top... glorifying God is. Therefore if we go through tribulation, God hasn't failed us, if his goal in

allowing us to go through that trial is his glory. Job lost everything and yet praised God. Abraham was told to kill his son and yet obeyed God. Joseph was sold into slavery, falsely accused of rape, left to rot in prison and said that in the end God meant all of it for good. God allows us to go through trials so that we will learn to be satisfied in Him alone. This is why **James 1:2-4** says trials produce spiritual perfection. **If we are perfected through tribulations and proceed to give God more glory, how can we see trials as a failure of God's love for us?** We can't.

And... If we die or our loved ones die, God still hasn't failed us if by our death or another's he is meant to receive glory. How can we even begin to think that God has failed any of us when death is a reward. For those of us who are saved we are given eternal life with glorified bodies and no more pain... ever. Look at **1 Peter 1:3-4**. Our hope is in heaven. And for those who are not saved, it is sad, and tragic, but we must recognize that they were given every opportunity to accept Christ as their Lord and savior and they ultimately denied him in their hearts for good. God didn't want them to die in their sins... they chose that. Listen to **2 Peter 3:9**.

So... the only way God can fail us is to... fail to fulfill his promises, fail to give us a chance to be saved, fail to save those who have believed, fail to give us his holy spirit, fail to give us an opportunity to evangelize and disciple, or fail to give you a chance to live a life that will bring him glory. But God will never fail in any of these areas.. because he never has and he never will. One of the most famous verses in the Bible is **Jeremiah 29:11** and it says that God knows his plans for us and he's given us plans for hope and a future. God has a plan for your life to bring him glory and he will see it through. And when you are struggling through trials... **Philippians 4:19** says that God will supply all you need in Christ. If God has given you Christ... he has given you everything. If you have Christ you have won... and thus God has not failed... not in the least.

Our hope is in the fact that God had never failed us and that he will never fail us – no matter what! So how could we resolve to give up, to call it quits, to run out the clock and simply exist when our trials are for our good and heaven awaits? **If God has never given up on you, how could you ever give up on Him?**

Lastly, we can persevere when we... **Resolve To Pray Constantly**. We persevere when we have a confidence that we aren't really in trouble. Other than the confidence we find in the Word of God and the promises of God that he has kept... prayer is our primary means by which we find confidence in our Lord. **Ephesians 6:18** tells us to pray on all occasions and in all ways. A.W. Pink said, "Prayer is not designed for the furnishing of God with the knowledge of what we need, but it is designed as a confession to Him of our sense of need." Calvin explained that the Lord instructs His people to pray, "for He ordained it not so much for His own sake as for ours.

In other words, prayer is our means of communicating with God our dependence upon him. But when we talk about prayer and depending on God one of the main questions that always arises is... "does our prayers change God's direction?" The answer is, "yes and no". No, God is sovereign and knows all things throughout all of time. He has a set plan that is unchanging. Yes, God hears us and turns his heart towards us in compassion. I don't have the time but there are countless examples of God doing something for someone who prayed for it. And the Bible has verse after verse telling us to make our requests known to God who will answer us accordingly. And so... this is a paradox. A paradox that unfortunately we do not have the brain power to solve here and now. We must simply agree that this is what the word teaches us and so we must adhere to it in faith.

Regardless **we don't pray primarily to change God's direction... rather we pray to let God know that we are powerless to change our direction without his spirit working inside us.** The more dependent we are upon God in prayer the more hope we can have that he will work through us and through our situation. Prayer connects us with God in relationship. You cannot grow close to God apart from prayer. You can know things about him, but apart from prayer you can't know him. And so, the more constant we are in prayer, the closer to God we are, and the closer to God we are, the less worried we are concerning our trials. If you find that you have been frustrated, or even angry concerning your past or current tribulations... it is highly likely that you don't have a strong prayer life... or a constant prayer life. Prayer is the key to a life at peace in the midst of storms.

We will experience trials in this life... isn't it a good thing that we have a direct line to the one in charge. So it's pointless to just give up when things don't go our way... rather just pray to the one who has your back and is always available. We can't just give up and adopt the mentality to merely exist when things go wrong... instead we must go to God in prayer. **If God has never given up on you, how could you give up on Him.**

Application

When faced with trials and tribulations in this life we can choose to give up, run out the clock, and merely exist... or we can choose to persevere. We can choose to be patient in our tribulations and patient in the Word. And in doing so we will remember that God has always come through for his children, he will always come through for us, and he has given us a direct link to him through prayer. The bottom line is clear... God has never given up on your and... **If God has never given up on you, how could you give up on Him?**

Conclusion

The story is told that Andrew Jackson's boyhood friends just couldn't understand how he became a famous general and then the President of the United States. They knew of other men who had greater talent but who never succeeded. One of Jackson's friends said, "Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the pike from Jackson, was not only smarter but he could throw Andy three times out of four in a wrestling match. But look where Andy is now." Another friend responded, "How did there happen to be a fourth time? Didn't they usually say three times and out?" "Sure, they were supposed to, but not Andy. He would never admit he was beat -- he would never stay 'threwed.' Jim Brown would get tired, and on the fourth try Andrew Jackson would throw him and be the winner." Picking up on that idea, someone has said, "The thing that counts is not how many times you are 'threwed,' but whether you are willing to stay 'threwed'." We may face setbacks, but we must take courage and go forward in faith. Then, through the Holy Spirit's power we can be the eventual victor over sin and the world. The battle is the Lord's, so there is no excuse for us to stay "threwed"!