

Endurance and Perseverance



Jesus' Disciples Must Continually and Persistently Petition God
 Obey God the Father's Will no Matter What the Cost
 Witness by Building on the "Rock"
 Always be Led only by the Holy Spirit
 Beware of False Doctrines

Jesus' Disciples Must Continually and Persistently Petition God

Jesus likened His followers to salt, the most common spice. It was used to flavor any food, but if it lost its own flavor nothing else was able to renew and restore its usefulness. He also said that believers were the lights of the world because of their reborn spirits by the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. (Jesus likewise declared that He was the Light of the world and that everyone who followed Him would also have the light of eternal Life. The part of the body that lit it was the eye--whatever a person witnessed and continued to give their attention. Therefore, It was important to practice monitoring only good things because what people saw repeatedly determined the health, or lack of it, of their inner being--their soul. If what they determined to be light really was not, but a deception. They deceived themselves, for their perception of light really was darkness, something contrary to God and His will and ways.

"You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its flavor how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and be trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand and it gives light to the house. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven....

The lamp of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eye is good your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy your whole body will be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is (really) darkness how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 5:13-16, 6:22-23)

"He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend lend me two loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey and I have nothing to set before him.'

And, he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me. The door is shut and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give to you.'

'I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give to him as many as he needs. So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you, for everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.'

'Or, what man is there among you that if his son asks for bread will give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish will he give him a serpent instead of a fish, or if he asks for an egg will he offer him a scorpion? If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him?' (Matthew 7:7-11 & Luke 11:5-13)

Whenever people required anything: whether it was time, assistance, money, or something tangible, even if they asked a good friend they might not receive what they petitioned. In Jesus' example it was not availability or cost, but convenience that caused the second man to deny what the first asked of him. The first person wanted the second to loan him something small and inexpensive, but at a very inconvenient moment, both for him as well as his family. The inquiry was not about something vital either; it did not involve a precarious situation, rather merely a social one. Therefore the second man refused to help his friend. However, the first man did not leave but kept insisting. Just to shut him up the second man relented, got out of bed, unlocked and opened his door, and gave his friend what he asked for. Most likely the second man became and maybe even stayed annoyed for awhile, but the first did get what he wanted and went away satisfied.

Jesus said that it was the first man's persistence in looking for, requesting, and insistent knocking that finally got him what he desired. If he had simply departed from the source to satisfy his need he never would have seen it fulfilled. Jesus taught that every single person who did this, especially from God, eventually would receive what he or she solicited. It was just a matter of asking in line with His will, which could be determined in the Scriptures or seen by watching how His Son Jesus behaved. If someone did not despair and give up, decide or forget to remain constant, choose to search in a different manner, eventually they would experience what they asked God to perform, like sustenance or care for any affliction. (*Isaiah 55:11*)

"He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying, 'There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

Now there was a widow in that city and she came to him saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary!'

And, he would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her lest by her continued coming she weary me.'

Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust said, and will not God avenge His Own elect who cry out day and night to Him though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes will He really find fault on the earth?'" (Luke 18:1-8)

Jesus added that human parents who were flawed still knew how to give beneficial instead of harmful things to their own offspring. Consequently, God the Father Who was perfect would know how and be able to give far better gifts to His children. Jesus never said that God gave or caused anyone *bad* things--like despair and depression, anxiety, fear, poverty, disease, or even death. In fact He only mentioned God presenting mankind good things that would benefit them.

"All the promises of God in (Jesus Christ) are yes and amen, to the glory of God through us." (II Corinthians 1:20)

Obey God the Father's Will No Matter What the Cost

"When they had sung hymns, He went out to the Mount of Olives as He was accustomed and His disciples also followed Him. He went out with His disciples over the Brook Cordon where there was a garden which He and His disciples entered, and Judas who betrayed Him also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with His disciples.

Then Jesus said to them, 'You will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But, after I have been raised I will go before you to Galilee.'

Peter answered and said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.'

Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this night before the rooster crows you will deny me three times.'

Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You I will not deny You!'

And, so said all the disciples.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemene and He said to His disciples 'Sit here while I go pray over there. Pray that you not enter into temptation.' and He took Peter, James, and John with Him and He began to be sorrowful, troubled, and deeply distressed.' Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.' and He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw and He knelt down and prayed.

He went a little farther and fell on the ground on His face praying, 'O My Father, Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me. If it is possible let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will. Not My will but Yours be done.'

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping and said to Peter, 'What? Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch with Me one hour?

Watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

Again, a second time He went away and spoke the same words and prayed, 'O My Father if this cup cannot pass from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.' and when He returned He came and found them asleep again.... for their eyes were heavy and they did not know how to answer Him.

So He left them, went away again and prayed the third time saying the same words. Then an angel appeared to Him from Heaven strengthening Him and being in agony He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

When He rose up from prayer and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Why do you sleep? Rise and pray lest you enter into temptation. It is enough! Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'" (Matthew 26:30-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-47 & John 18:1-2)

Jesus told His disciples to pray while He was doing likewise. Why? So that they not enter temptation by Satan. Just because he was going to try to get Jesus to act more human than Godly by relying on His sense knowledge and forget His mission for the sake of physical and emotional pain and suffering, he did not forget to test the disciples at the same time. In this instance, Satan made them feel sleepy, which he was able to do because they were not watching out spiritually and indeed praying for God's help. They did not follow Jesus' commands and thus indeed fell into temptation, although his stimulus was so common and subtle that they never realized who was influencing their behavior.

Jesus flatly stated His Own human feelings about His imminent suffering and death/Death, three times not just once. He was indeed a true human being and did not relish the idea of what was about to befall Him. He asked His Father on three separate occasions to find another way to save mankind other than His personal misery and torture. Jesus was not blind to His physical situation, nor was He immune to the pain and anguish that He had relieved in so many other individuals. However, no matter what it took, Jesus was determined to bend His personal wished to a greater cause, so He followed His Father's directions. Once Jesus completely was ready to bend His Own thoughts and emotions in order to comply, His Father comforted Him mightily by sending angels to help Him.

"Although (Jesus) was a Son, He learned obedience through the things He suffered." (HEBREWS 5:8)

While Jesus was praying for Himself, He did not forget His disciples. He repeatedly went to check on how they were faring. When He saw them asleep, instead of letting them rest, He always woke and instructed them to watch, pray, and not fall back into the temptation to sleep, even though it was dark and quiet and probably very soothing and comfortable to do just that, at night, in a garden. Jesus wouldn't let them be distracted, no

matter how seemingly innocent the stakes were. Jesus knew that in a war, physical or spiritual, there were times when no matter how exhausted people became they could not afford to maintain their guard.

Jesus already had taught the disciples that their prayers were the key factor in not allowing themselves to be swayed by anything that tempted them to follow something than God's perfect will. No matter how seemingly harmless or beneficial their human reasoning told them that any other responses to a given stimulus would result they had to recognize and stand firmly grounded in this knowledge. Jesus Himself had prayed an exhaustive prayer to His Father expressly for them at their last dinner together right before He took them into the Garden of Gethsemene.

"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me for they are Yours, and all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world and I come to You, Holy Father, keep through Your Name those whom You have given Me, that they might be as We are. (John 10:30) While I was with them in the world I kept them in Your Name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture be fulfilled, but now I come to You and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

'I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of this world just as I am not of this world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world and for their sakes I sanctified Myself, that they also be sanctified in the world.

'I do not pray for their sakes alone, but for those who will believe in Me through their word--that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also be one in Us that the world may believe that You sent Me. And, the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they be made perfect in one just as We are One. I in them and You in Me, that they be made perfect in one and the world may know that You sent Me and have loved them as You loved Me.

'Father, I desire that they also Whom You gave Me be with Me where I am that they may behold Your glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You, but I have known You. And, these have known that You sent Me, and I have declared to them Your Name, and will declare it that the love with which You loved them may be fulfilled in them, and I in them." (John 17:9-26)

Although Jesus' prayer was all-inclusive, He realized that His will alone was not sufficient to keep His followers under His Father's direction and supervision completely.

They also had to pray by themselves and for themselves, just as He had shown and taught them to imitate. God had given them the freewill always to be able to choose how to respond and react.

As mentioned previously, even before Judas appeared with the soldiers and the mob, Jesus knew what was about to take place. Did he only know because He could hear them approaching? Probably not, because one of His disciples surely would have made a remark about it, just as Peter did about the fig tree. *****No, most likely Jesus knew the exact moment because of His close connection with His Father, especially when He had gone through such mental anguish to be able to fully be able to bend His will to Him. Jesus was using the knowledge that God had revealed to Him, without learning it from a physical source, such as any of His physical senses.

Witness by Building on the "Rock"

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me and hears My sayings and does them I will show you what he is like:

'Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them I will liken him to a wise man who dug deep and laid the foundation. Built his house on the rock and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and the stream beat vehemently against that house and could not shake it, and it did not fall for it was founded on the rock. But, everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand without a foundation. And, the rain descended, the flood came, and the wind blew, and the stream beat vehemently on that house and immediately it fell and great was its fall. The ruin of that house was great.'" (Matthew 7:24-27 & Luke 6:46-49)

Jesus instructed His followers to built the foundation of their faith in God and His will and abilities based on what they witnessed in Jesus, not about passing observations about the world around them. According to the Bible, if they chose to build the foundations of their lives on anything other than God the Father and His Son they were constructing groundwork of faith to sustain them through hardship on a lie. With *enough* pressure it would crumble a bit more every time they really needed it for support. Jesus taught that He was not foolish enough to do this either for Himself or His Church and they would withstand even the absolutely worst predicaments imaginable.

"On this rock (of divine revelation) I will build My Church and (even) the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:17)

Jesus told His followers that if they really loved Him they would obey His commands. (John 15:12-14) The proof of their love was that elementary. They were, and we are, accountable for awakening the gifts that God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, has presented to every person ever born, beginning with our *"measure of faith"* (Romans 12:3)

in Them. Jesus completed His personal work for mankind when He lived and died as a natural man. He already lived the perfect example of a life untouchable by Satan's kingdom and treachery. Afterwards, it was their turn to receive and benefit from all that He accomplished and transferred to mankind again.

Imagine that the houses referred to by Jesus were constructed right next to each other. They were built at the same time, equal in size, and made of identical materials. Their two foundations would be the single feature differentiating them from each other. That fact would not necessarily be visible and this sole distinction was the one factor that Jesus said would cause them to fall or remain standing after a "storm". This conception presented even more evidence that what people could see was far less important than the things that they could not. Therefore, it was crucial to be aware and be moved to think, speak, or act by God not their five physical senses, meaning, *"walk by faith not by sight."* (II Corinthians 5:7)

The Greek word for 'rock', as Jesus used it in this context, was *'petra'*--a massive, immovable boulder. He was referring to God the Holy Spirit giving information directly through a people's souls and spirits (inner man), not their five physical senses. Jesus told Peter that the Church of God was not limited to temporary constraints--those things that were visible, touchable, hearable, smellable, or tasteable. Rather, God's Kingdom was composed of invisible (Hebrews 11:3) and eternal (II Corinthians 4:18) substances. In fact it was that spiritual, not physical perceptions that Jesus said gave Peter the insight to realize that He indeed was the Christ.

Only Be Led by the Holy Spirit

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves, but beware of (people) for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought to them for My sake (Acts 9:1-2, 4) as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up do not worry about how or what you should speak, for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak, for it is not you who speak but the Spirit of My Father Who speaks in you." (Matthew 16:17)

Jesus knew the thoughts and hearts of all people. (Psalm 94:11; Isaiah 55:8; Matthew 9:4, 12:25; Luke 11:17; John 2:24-25; I Corinthians 3:20) Therefore, when He commissioned His disciples to go throughout all the earth and teach about Him, He recognized full well what they were up against and would have to endure. He had been their model and already had done what he was commanding them to do. He sent the Holy Spirit Who took up residence in Him when He had been baptized back to the earth to dwell in the heart of every new believer. (Acts 2:4) Therefore, although they could expect opposition they never needed to be concerned about their testimonies. Whenever they allowed His Spirit to work and speak through them He would do so and support and take care of them, forever.

"Then Jesus answered and said to them, " Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do, for whatever He does the Son also does, in like manner." (John 5:19)

Beware of False Doctrines

"The Pharisees and Sadducees came out and began to dispute with Him and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from Heaven.

But, He sighed deeply in His spirit and He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky but you cannot discern the signs of the times. Why does this generation seek a sign? A wicked and adulterous generation looks after a sign and assuredly I say to you no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.'

And, He left them and getting into the boat again departed to the other side.

Now when His disciples had come to the other side they had forgotten to take bread.

Then Jesus charged them, saying, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod,' and they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread.'

But, Jesus being aware of it said to them, 'O you of little faith, why did you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet perceive, or understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets full of fragments you took up?

They said to Him, 'Twelve'.

'Also, when I broke up the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?' and they said, 'Seven.'

'Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes do you not see? And having ears do you not hear? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread, but to beware of the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees?'

Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." (Matthew 16:1-12 & Mark 8:21)

This group of Pharisees and Sadducees did not even attempt to cover their disdain for Jesus and His message, but began to argue with Him immediately. Then they attempted to prove that He was a fraud by demanding a sign from Him concerning Heaven. However, Jesus spotted their conniving and countered their petition with one of His Own. He told them that if they easily could decipher the next morning's weather from the sky of the night before, they should be able to do the same by interpreting the Scriptures. God already had given them many signs like that which they requested, so Jesus left them

without ever satisfying their command. They had the answers already and as religious scholars they should have recognized them all.

Jesus warned His disciples to avoid the evil doctrines and behavior of those religious leaders, but instead imitate and practice only the gifts from God's true Spirit without any deviation. He also commanded them to remember two major miracles that they had witnessed and stay firm in their conviction about what the Scriptures really taught and guard every thought, feeling, word, and action. No matter how educated, knowledgeable, persuasive, or wise any people appeared to be if what they said conflicted in any way with God they were wrong and what they taught was quite dangerous. It only generated separation, animosity, prejudices, and disharmony among individuals and against His Father.

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and you do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and battle yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your own pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity against God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:1-4)

Jesus never wanted His disciples ever to be deceived into receiving instruction that was void of God's truth. Likewise, He also told them never to encourage such harmful communication, instigate it, or perpetuate it. Jesus told His men that if anyone at all, even seemingly harmlessly modified the Gospel of Christ slightly it altered what God has said enough to make the teaching a deceptive and corrupted invention that He would not tolerate. God the Father even viewed this behavior so contaminating to His message that later His Spirit directed the apostle Paul to tell the churches that anyone who perverted Jesus' message was accursed when they did so. Even a small addition, reduction, or variation of Jesus' Gospel was a potentially wicked distortion. Therefore, whenever anyone at all shared the Gospel they had to be very careful to adhere to the true and complete ideas contained therein.

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him Who called you, in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel; which really is not another, but, there are some who want to pervert the Gospel of the Christ. But, even if we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel to you than that which we already have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9) (II Timothy 3:1-17)

Unfortunately, too often it was the case that people held their own self-centered agendas above God's message and tried to enhance their own importance. Jesus taught that this behavior always stirred up strife among people, not bonded them together with God. Eventually, divisions sprang up between groups that wanted to intimidate each other as they continued to argue their particular beliefs. God's original message may even have

been utterly lost to them in their struggle for dominance. The larger an audience they could sway the more seemingly powerful they would become. Inevitably they would continue to preach and listen to their own perverted gospels, so much that they would become completely deaf to Christ's.

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men--according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8)

Jesus said that people who were in earnest about searching for God's truth should stay away from any and all behavior that would entice and eventually corrupt their minds and hearts away from Him, yet He also socialized with sinners. Was this hypocritical behavior on His part? The established religious leaders of that period certainly thought as much and accused Him of duplicity. Jesus pointed out to them that a well person did not require a physician, but an unhealthy one did. He was saying that these people benefited greatly from His presence and teaching and were affected by His goodness, whereas *He* would not be by their sinful natures. Remember, Jesus successfully had resisted *all* of Satan's temptations in the wilderness, so there was no chance that He would relent and go against His flawless connection to His Father by keeping company with certain people. Besides, since at that time Jesus was the only person ever born who had not rebelled against the Law or been reborn. He always was in the company of sinners whether He liked it or not, even if He dined with any Pharisees.

Jesus recognized that no other human being had the faith and endurance to even come close to His. Average people did not possess His capacity to resist the temptations to sin because their heart was not nearly attuned to God the Father's. When others were around sin it constantly dominated them so they had a much stronger tendency to conform to earthly, visible, peer pressures instead of always avoiding them. This was why Jesus so strongly warned His disciples not to be even *near* its influences.

Jesus also knew that His Father wanted people to be content with what they had and not envy the wealth and tangible possessions of others, as the Pharisees did. This did not signify that God was against money or what it could purchase. On the contrary, as alluded to previously He Himself declared the following:

"Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments.... Then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' And, you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He Who gives you the power to get wealth that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers as it is this day. Then it shall be that if you by any means forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and serve them and worship them. I testify to you this day that you will surely perish." (Deuteronomy 8:11a, 17-19)

Remember, God never forbade people to have wealth; He was not against the money itself, just the carnal mindset that its acquisition caused in many people. They too

often began to crave its deceitful and temporary pleasures over the true and lasting gifts that He had planned for them in Heaven. Additionally, God had stated that some people actually felt superior to others because of the amount of their possessions. This often led to envy, jealousy, greed, judgment, feelings of dominance, and a thirst for power. It also could result in a craving for recognition, fame, and being the object of homage, which was idolatry.

Only by imitating Jesus can people stop disobeying God and begin to approach Him in order to receive the full life He always intended for all of us to enjoy, no matter when we live or where. And, the choices and challenges to learn from, as well as receive the benefits that we can claim as siblings to Him, are completely up to us.