

KEEP PERSEVERING

Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

(1 Timothy 6:11b)

Like every other student in Ontario, Coral has been learning online since January 4, 2021. This quadmester she has been taking math and science. Working from home myself while Coral has been doing school online, I have overheard at times her teachers' lessons and conversations with the students. I have been so impressed with Coral's math teacher in particular over these past several weeks. Despite the challenges of teaching math online, he has been so supportive and encouraging of the students learning under this difficult reality. This morning before giving his students their final exam he commended them for persevering through these past several weeks learning under these difficult circumstances. He encouraged them to give themselves a pat on the back for all that they have endured and to keep persevering in the quadmester ahead. When I heard him say this to the students, I was so impressed and moved by his pastoral approach and words to his students.

It is not just students learning online that need to hear this message to keep persevering. As I read the newspaper this morning story after story reminded me how people need this message during this second lockdown. The paper reflected on how so many people are finding this second lockdown harder than the first one we had back last March. So many stories were about people no longer being able to persevere.

Some of the stories included:

- A nurse who recently committed suicide not being able to cope any longer with the pressures of front-line care giving in her hospital setting.
- A TTC worker who tried to commit suicide by lying on the tracks due to concerns of safety at work with transporting people on crowded buses.
- Students dropping out of school after struggling with online learning.
- A request from an older man for medically assisted dying despite no health problems because he is having difficulty coping through the pandemic.

- Clinical psychologists seeing more referrals for anxiety, panic attacks, aggressive behaviour and abuse, severe stomach aches and sleep disruptions.

It appears that many people are finding themselves at a breaking point in the midst of this second lock-down and finding it harder to cope and persevere.

This has been a hard journey at times for all of us since the first lockdown in March of 2020. We have all struggled at times emotionally, physically, and spiritually during this pandemic. Every one of us have had our good days and not so good days. There have been times during this when we think to ourselves, we are coping well and other days when we may feel it is getting the better of us. We have all persevered to this point. One of the reasons we have persevered is because of our faith and trust in God. In order to have a faith that helps us to persevere, it requires us to put our faith into action.

This requirement comes out in Paul's advice to Timothy in *1 Timothy 6: 11-12*

But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so, run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.

Paul used very active verbs here to encourage Timothy to keep PERSEVERING: RUN, PURSUE, FIGHT, HOLD TIGHTLY. Some people think Christianity is a passive faith that if we just simply wait for God to act then we will be able to persevere. Paul points out to Timothy that the way to truly persevere is to:

- 1) Remember you are a person of God,
- 2) Run from all that is evil,
- 3) Keep pursuing righteousness, a godly life and godly qualities,
- 4) Keep fighting each day to maintain a true faith,
- 5) Hold on to the promise of eternal life.

Paul reminds Timothy that it is by actively pursuing these things that he will be able to persevere no matter what challenges or obstacles he faces in his life and ministry.

Paul's advice to Timothy would be his advice to us right now in the midst of the pandemic – you will persevere if you keep your faith active through this time. The pandemic has caused us to become more inactive in some areas of our life but let's make sure when it comes to our faith that we remain active. By so doing it will allow us to keep persevering right through to the end.

As I come to the end of this message, I leave you with the same message that Coral's math teacher gave to his students.

Give yourself a pat on the back for leaning on God and your faith to help you persevere to this point. Keep persevering as you move forward in this difficult journey caused by the pandemic by keeping your faith active.

Keep Safe & God Bless,

Pastor Dean