

The Persistent Church

An overview of Philippians

Have you ever known someone who just refused to give up on anything no matter what happened? It might be a problem they're going through in a task that they need to accomplish or in life in general. Such a person is known to be persistent.

Some synonyms of persistence are:

- Perseverance, determination, doggedness, resolution, tenacity

Some definitions of persistence are:

- Refusing to give up or let go
- Persevering obstinately

1) The Background of the Church at Philippi that made it a Persistent Church

- Philippi was a Roman Colony and probably still practised paganism by the fact that there was a girl who had a spirit of divination and her owners made money out of her. When Paul cast the spirit out of her they were dragged to face the authorities and then falsely accused. The magistrate judged against them, had them flogged and incarcerated. This depicts the immoral state of the city in which the church was established.
- The first convert to Christ was Lydia. When Paul and Silas went to the river on the Sabbath they spoke to a group of women there and Lydia believed. Her and her family were then baptised
- The second converts were the jailer and his household.
- The Philippian church was born out of persecution and probably faced suffering during its existence
 - Philippians 1: 29 "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him"
- However this epistle doesn't give much indication of the hardships of the Philippian church as much as a call to follow Paul in sufferings
- It is in the face of persecution, hardship, distress, discouragement that the church becomes a persistent church, not only to survive, but to flourish
 - As long as we are persistent in our pursuit of our deepest destiny, we will continue to grow. We cannot choose the day or the time when we will fully bloom. It happens in its own time. Denis Waitley

2) The Qualities of a Persistent Church

- Joy
 - Joy in partnership in the Gospel (1: 4 – 5)
 - Joy in the preaching of the Gospel whatever the motives (1: 18)
 - Joy in the spiritual growth of others (1: 25)
 - Joy in serving one another (2: 17)
 - Joy in the Lord (3: 1; 4: 4)
 - Joy in concern for others (4: 10)
- Strong relationships
 - In Partnerships (1: 3 – 5)
 - Timothy (2: 19)

- Epaphroditus (2: 25)
 - Being united through humility (2: 1 – 4)
 - Helping resolve conflicts (3: 2 – 3)
 - A church needs to persist in having right relationships to persist against problems from the outside.
- The Gospel
 - A partnership in the Gospel (1: 3 – 5)
 - Paul in prison for the Gospel (1: 16)
 - Him being in prison helped others become fearless in proclaiming the Gospel (1: 14)
 - The believers are encouraged to live worthy of the Gospel (1: 27)
- Spiritual Ambition
 - For righteousness (1: 11)
 - To be blameless and pure (2: 15)
 - To know Christ above all (3: 7 – 10)
 - Pressing on to what lies ahead in Christ (3: 13 – 14)
 - For contentment (4: 12)

3) Having what it takes to be a Persistent Church

- From Paul's side he did not let imprisonment and suffering get him down
- Even though he was writing from prison he never complains but sets his sights on what pleases God, the Gospel and the way the church would benefit through himself, the Gospel and others.
- What it takes to persist is attitude
- Where is our focus?
 - Is it on our problems or have we focussed on God and His purposes in our lives, in the church and in the world?
- If our morale is low then maybe we need to refocus in order to persist in doing what is good and right in God's sight.
- Romans 2: 7 "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life."