

"THE POWER TO ENDURE"

INTRODUCTION

During the days of World War II, a transport plane carrying thirty-three men went down in the Pacific Ocean. Immediately, several rescue planes were sent out to search for the survivors. One of those rescue planes, after hours of searching, was just about to give up when one of the crew members urged they scan the area just one more time. The pilot agreed, and several moments later they spotted the survivors in the water clinging to the life rafts. And so today, thirty-three men owe their lives to that one man who said, "Let's try again".

DEVELOPMENT

Stress, tension and pressure are the daily companions of many who gather here on a Sunday morning. At times I suspect that many of us find ourselves so pushed, so harassed, and so driven that secretly we say to ourselves, "What's the use of all this". We're tempted to throw up our hands and walk away from whatever it is that's getting through to us. When things do press down on us and we feel it useless to go on, then it is that we need to dig deeper into our resources of faith and exercise this power to endure. I wonder.....are -

Are things pressing you down? Do you feel it's useless to, as they say, to "hang in there" any longer? Here are some of the vital facts on the life of one of the greatest men this country has produced - Abraham Lincoln. He certainly had cause for discouragement:

- 1831 - Lincoln failed in business.
- 1832 - He was defeated for the Illinois legislature.
- 1833 - He again failed in business.
- 1834 - He was elected to the Legislature.
- 1835 - His sweetheart died.
- 1836 - He had a nervous breakdown.
- 1838 - He was defeated for Speaker.
- 1840 - He was defeated for Elector.
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As someone has said, and I think it's very true - "On the debris of despair, character is so often built". Life does bring to each and every one of us its share of disappointments, but our defeats and failures can often be overcome if - we use ~~only we possess this ability to see things through.~~ The power to endure can often make all the difference. Vince Lombardi who coached the Green Bay Packers so successfully for a number of years was quoted by Jerry Kramer in his book, Instant Replay, as saying:

"The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall....."

BURDEN OF ILL HEALTH

One source of possible discouragement for some is ill health. The loss of health often causes a person to slow down when he wants to keep going. In some cases it may cause a person to give up trying altogether. It's not easy to be burdened with arthritis, or heart trouble, of a nagging back ache, or diabetes...just to name a few. But is it not true that some of the finest and greatest contributions to life have been made by those who were considered to be less than physically sound.

them as stepping stones to personal growth.

One thinks of Beethoven in regard to this - the composer of that beautiful melody to which our first hymn this morning was set. Deaf and grief-stricken in the autumn years of his life, his biographers tell us that he often held a stick between his teeth, resting the other end on the piano in order to get the tonal effects through vibration.

Franklin Roosevelt comes to mind, too. He was unable to stand without the aid of painfully heavy braces, and yet he transcended the limitations forced upon him by his physical disability. He refused to give in and accept the verdict that he must spend his life in bed or in a wheel chair and let the rest of the world go by. On one occasion, after Roosevelt had been stricken with polio, his friend Louis Howe was visiting him. Howe was concerned to see great beads of sweat on Roosevelt's forehead, and his face was drawn up in severe concentration. When Roosevelt noticed that Howe was watching him, he relaxed, smiled and said:

"Louie, just just don't know how much fun it is just to try to move your big toe and to be able to do it".

The power to endure pain and suffering. The ability to persevere and to see things through cannot be found apart from one's spiritual life. Courage, discipline, devotion and constancy - all are drawn from the reservoir of one's religious faith. I think the strength and the vibrancy of one's measure of faith in times of stress and crisis can often be the difference between making it through and not. ~~It is my belief that if our prayers are sincere, and if they're backed by hard, honest effort, we can find our way through those dark, and difficult moments. The burden may not be lifted, but we find the strength to live with it... to cope with it.~~

THWARTED AMBITIONS AND UNREALIZED DREAMS

Another source of discouragement may spring from thwarted ambition and unrealized dreams. Here the depression and the sense of keen disappointment can be so real that a person's life can get wrecked. All of us have our own private dreams and aspirations. Sometimes things happen beyond our control to smash those hopes. ~~This is life. Such things do happen, but life - as they say - has to go on.~~

Remember at such times that all is not lost. Life is too precious to be spoiled by thwarted ambitions and unrealized dreams. Scores of people have done some magnificent living with what has remained after the dreams have been shattered.

A story is told of an English doctor who met with disappointment in the form of a physical breakdown at the age of thirty-four. He was ordered to a lonely farm in the highlands of Scotland. He became bored with the inactivity and thus decided that he would do something he had always wanted to do. He would write a novel. He purchased paper in a near-by village and began to write. He wrote and wrote. After about three months, he became discouraged and decided that his writing was worthless. He threw the manuscript into the waste basket and went out to talk to the farmer next door whose name was John Angus. John Angus had a deep reverence for literature and learning. He was disgusted with the thought of this young doctor giving up on the idea of writing a novel. John Angus said to him:

"You may be right and I may be wrong, doctor, but my father ditched this bog all his days and never made a pasture. Pasture or no pasture....this is where he stamped his foot on his spade. I cannot help but dig. My father knew and I know that if we dig long enough a pasture can be made".

I couldn't help but think of this man as last night Channel 9 showed Peck in the movie based on Cronin's novel, "Keys of the Kingdom".

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The doctor gained a new insight and learned a lesson from that Scottish farmer. Back he went and rescuing the manuscript from his waste basket, he proceeded to complete the novel which made him famous. A. J. Cronin's great dream of becoming an outstanding doctor was spoiled, but we would have to admit that he has done some magnificent living with what remained after his dream was spoiled.

Who was it who once said: "Quitters never win, and winners never quit". Even when the battle appears to be going against us, we ought not to give up and turn aside. You'll recall that it was the Duke of Wellington who offered the following explanation for the victory of the British over the French at Waterloo:

"The British soldiers are not braver than their enemies, they are simply braver five minutes longer".

And as our English friends will remind us - those qualities of endurance, perseverance, patience as well as bravery were learned on the playing fields of Eton.

CLOSING A friend who climbed Mt. Washington recently was telling me that there's a marker on the trail leading to the top of Mt. Washington which points out the spot where a woman climber apparently lay down and died. On a clear day her reasons for doing so appear to be somewhat ridiculous and very questionable. For her destination was so close at hand that she could have hit it with a stone. One hundred more steps and she would have reached the cabin at the top of the mountain. But she didn't know this. Discouraged by the storm that beat on her body, blinded her vision, took away her courage, she died one hundred steps from the top.

Perhaps our goal is closer at hand than we think. Who knows? I should like to think and believe that the person who has the spiritual reserves and resources is going to be able to make it. And that those who have learned to live their lives in the shadow of God always have the energy for one more step, for as Isaiah reminds us:

"He gives power to the faint, and to him who has
no might he increases strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary and young
men shall fall exhausted.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their
strength.
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary.
And they shall walk and not faint."

PRAYER It is in this trust and in this ancient assurance of Isaiah, O God, that we assemble in worship this hour - here to receive the bread and wine - symbols of new life given us by Thy Son. We pray, Our Father, for perseverance to face the adversities and handicaps with which we do battle with the strong and vibrant faith we can receive from Thee.

Support us, not only through the hours of this day, but through the hours of a new week that approaches. Give us the power to endure no matter what the test may be, nor how discouraging the battle may now be going. Give us strength, and patience to endure. In the name and spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen

"THE POWER TO ENDURE"

A transport plane carrying thirty-three men crashed in the Pacific Ocean during the days of World War II. Rescue planes were sent out immediately to look for survivors. One of the rescue planes, after hours of searching, was about to give up when one of the crew members urged that they scan the area just one more time. The pilot agreed, and several minutes later they saw, down below them, the survivors clinging to life rafts. And so today, thirty-three men owe their lives to that one man who said, "Let's try again".

Many people are living under terrific pressures. Many of us find ourselves so pushed, harassed, and driven that we often say to ourselves, "What's the use of all this." This desire to throw up our hands, and have done with it all often breaks into our thinking. When things press down on us, and we feel it is useless to go on, it is then that we need to exercise the power to endure.

Abraham Lincoln certainly had cause for discouragement in his life time. When one stops to consider the failures that he passed through, it is quite apparent that he possessed this special quality I speak of, namely this power to endure.

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Life brings to every individual its share of disappointments. But our failures and our defeats can often be overcome if we possess the ability to see things through. This power to endure often makes all the difference.

One source of discouragement for many people is ill health. The loss of health often causes a person to slow down and in some cases to give up trying altogether. It's not easy to be sick.....really sick..burdened with arthritis, heart trouble, diabetes...just to name a few. But I would point out to you that some of the greatest and finest contributions to life have been made by those who were considered to be less than physically sound.

Beethoven composed some of his most beautiful music while grief stricken and deaf. His biographers tell us that he often held a stick between his teeth, resting the other end on the piano, in order to get the tonal effects through vibration.

Franklin Roosevelt was unable to stand without the aid of painfully heavy braces, and yet he became president of our country. He refused to give in and accept the verdict that he must spend his life in bed or in a wheel chair and let the rest of the world go by. Louis Howe tells a

story which illustrates something of this man's determination and courage. The incident occurred shortly after Roosevelt was stricken with polio. On this occasion Louis Howe was quite concerned to see great beads of sweat on Roosevelt's forehead, and his face drawn up in severe concentration. When Roosevelt noticed that Howe was watching him, he relaxed and smiled saying: "Louie, you just don't know how much fun it is just to try to move your big toe, and to be able to do it!"

The power to endure.....this ability to see things through grows out of our religious faith. It demands courage. It calls for discipline. It requires devotion. The strength of our religious faith in times of crisis is often the difference between success and failure. Some people curse God and life. Others display the grit and the faith to keep on going no matter what the situation. If our prayers are sincere, and if they are backed up by hard, honest effort, we can expect to come through the darker moments of life victoriously.

Another source of discouragement springs from thwarted ambitions and unrealized dreams. Here the depression and the unhappiness can be so real that it can wreck a person's life. We all have our own private dreams and aspirations. Let's try and tie this down to a more specific situation. The future appears to be very bright for a person. The days are filled with happiness resulting perhaps from love, or success and glory, or adventure. And then something happens quite beyond the control of the person. We won't say what it is because it could be one of many things. But the dream is suddenly shattered! The happiness disappears. The love is gone. The ambition is thwarted. Such things happen every day. But life must go on.

It would be fair to say that all is not lost. Life is too precious to be spoiled by thwarted ambitions and unrealized dreams. Scores of people have done some magnificent living with what has remained after the dream has faded. Launch out into the deep.

A story is told of an English doctor who met with disappointment in the form of a physical breakdown at the age of thirty-four. He was ordered to a lonely farm in the Highlands of Scotland. He became bored with the inactivity, and thus decided that he would do something he had always wanted to do. He would write a novel! He purchased paper in a near-by village, and began to write. He wrote and wrote. After about three months, he became discouraged and decided that his writing was worthless. He threw the manuscript into the waste basket and went out to talk to the farmer next door whose name was John Angus. John Angus had reverence for literature and learning. He was disgusted with the thought of this young man giving up on the idea of writing a novel. And he said to him:

"You may be right and I may be wrong, doctor, but my father ditched this bog all his days, and never made a pasture. Pasture or no pasture....this is where he stamped his foot on his spade. I cannot help but dig. My father knew and I know that if we dig long enough a pasture can be made."

The young doctor learned a lesson. He went back and rescued the manuscript from the waste basket and completed the novel which made him famous. A. J. Cronin learned to see things through. His great dream of becoming an outstanding doctor was spoiled, but he has done some

magnificent living with what remained after the dream faded!

We must not give up even if the battle seems to be going against us. One of the great heroes of any English schoolboy is the Duke of Wellington. Any Englishman will tell you that he was responsible for defeating Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815. He was called on to explain the many victories of the British soldiers, and did so in these words:

"The British soldiers are not braver than their enemies, they are simply braver five minutes longer."

The power to endure means the difference between defeat and victory. The ability to see things through means the difference between failure or success.

There is a marker on the trail leading to the top of Mt. Washington which indicates the spot where a woman climber lay down and died. On a clear day her reasons for doing so appear to be ridiculous and questionable. Her destination was so close at hand that she could have hit it with a stone. One hundred more steps and she would have reached the cabin at the top of the mountain. But she didn't know this. She was discouraged by the storm which beat on her body, blinded her vision, and took away her courage. She died one hundred steps from the top.

The goal that we seek may be closer at hand than we think. The person who has the necessary spiritual resources will make it. The person who has learned to live his life in the shadow of God always has energy for one more step, for as Isaiah reminds us:

"He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fail exhausted.

But they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
And they shall walk and not faint."

LET US PRAY:

Our Heavenly Father, it is in this trust and in this assurance that we come to Thy table this morning. Help us to find new strength for the work we are called on to do. Support us, not only through this day, but through the days of this week ahead, and give to us the power to endure no matter how discouraging or how disappointing our lot in life may be. In Thy name, we pray. Amen.