



How Can I Persevere When Life Gets Tough? (Part II)

Luke 21:19: (Expanded Bible) *By continuing to have faith your endurance/perseverance, you will save your lives or gain/win your souls.*



Last week we talked about perseverance as an essential aspect of our Christian lives. We saw that persevering means much more than simply hanging on when things are tough. It means we set our hearts and minds on moving forward, no matter how small the steps might be. We examined some Isaiah texts that gave us a glimpse of Jesus' own focus - what his "game face" - looked like. We established that we need perseverance in many areas of life and discussed it in the context of our trials and afflictions. We heard the story of Jonathan, a 14-year-old young man who is persevering through a serious case of Scoliosis. Today, we expand the scope of our perseverance conversation as we look at the persecutions and tests of loyalty every Christian must endure. We do this both scripturally and through the stories of Lorain and Fred, two mature Christians whose life experiences pressed them to persevere in ways they never saw coming.



We all must persevere, but we but we each accomplish it in different ways. Our unique experiences give us unique opportunities. Here are three "game faces" of perseverance as supported by Scripture:

The game face of a soldier - the face of one sworn to duty for a cause that he is willing to die for:

2 Timothy 2:3-7: (NASB) ³*Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*

The game face of an athlete - (14-year-old Jonathan was our example of this in Part I) the face of discipline and focus; it is the face of training to compete and win:

⁵*Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.*

The game face of the farmer - the face of patience, knowledge, hard work and consistency. It is the face of steady discipline and compassion:

⁶*The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. ⁷Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

One is not less than the other. The athlete, the soldier and the farmer each have unique experiences and different game faces of perseverance.



Lorain is my "third-generation" friend - our parents are friends; our grandparents were friends. We were brought up together. She has a serious autoimmune disorder called Multiple Sclerosis that completely upended her life, and yet she perseveres. I wanted to know what was it that made her not only keep going, but to do so with joy and peace.



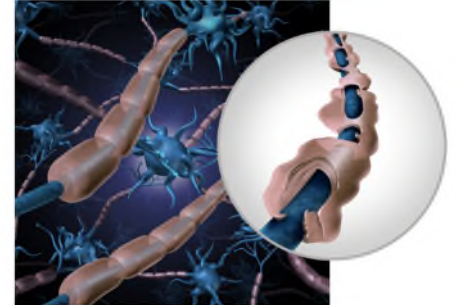


As we listen to Lorain, let's visualize her having the game face of a soldier.



Defining Multiple Sclerosis and Lorain's diagnosis

Lorain: Multiple Sclerosis means scar tissue. What's happening is the myelin sheath that is on your nerves, that protects your nerves, is getting worn away. In its place, scar tissue forms so it interrupts the electricity that goes from your brain to the nerve. To me it seems like it's almost like a stroke where somebody has to relearn to do something because something's interrupted. When I was diagnosed in 2005, it was diagnosed as Relapsing-remitting Multiple Sclerosis which means sometimes you have symptoms and things go crazy and then other times you feel like you don't have anything. It's like it goes back and forth. It's always treatable and manageable. They don't have a cure for it, but you learn how to manage it. I was really, really struggling. I was in sort of in denial. I was having all kinds of symptoms of being fatigued, couldn't walk as long, sometimes I had a hard time getting up the stairs. I kind of knew that something was going on, but I kept saying, no, it's not this. The lady I was taking voice lessons from, she's the one who ultimately said, "Hey I made an appointment for you with my neurologist and you're going to him." Obviously the Lord's overruling.



Julie: How old were you, Lorain?

Lorain: 36 years old.

At age 36 in 2005, she has a career, a husband, a house, two cats, a wonderful life and a great future. Then this disease starts creeping up on her and everything she depended on is about to change.

In this situation, perseverance becomes a necessity because the situation was unexpected. We will look at the game face of a soldier as we unfold Lorain's story.

We suggested three kinds of experiences that stimulate the building up of personal perseverance:

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| <p>1. Trials and Afflictions:</p> | <p>THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE A PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL PERSEVERANCE.
JONATHAN/ATHLETE - PART I</p> |
| <p>2. Persecution:</p> | <p>THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PRINCIPLED PERSEVERANCE.
LORAIN/SOLDIER - PART II</p> |
| <p>3. The Testing of our Loyalty:</p> | <p>THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PASSIONATE PERSEVERANCE.
FRED/FARMER - PART II</p> |



Reaction to a new reality

There's a lot of different emotions that you kind of go through. The main thing was, "Oh, okay." I know that doesn't sound very dramatic but the thing that really annoyed me was that the first thing that these medical neurologists are sitting there talking about is, "Well, you know there are all kinds of good wheelchairs nowadays." This is not what I want to hear! That just made me really mad and I decided right then and there I'm not going to give in to it. I'm going to fight it. I'm just not giving in to it.

It was this fighting attitude that made us think of the game face of a soldier.

Lorain was diagnosed with this debilitating disease. Her initial reaction could have been one of acceptance, but she had to have that game face of a soldier in order to fight through it. We will continue with Lorain's story throughout the podcast and see how she was able to manage through this and other difficulties.

Along with our trials and afflictions, we have a second kind of experience to develop perseverance:



PERSECUTION: THESE EXPERIENCES REQUIRE PRINCIPLED PERSEVERANCE.

To be persecuted means to be pursued in a positive or negative way. The Bonus Material provides examples of the positive way. Negative persecution requires a principled perseverance.

Hebrews 12:3-4: (NASB) ³For consider him who has **endured** <5278> (persevered) such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.

Persecution, by virtue of its mere existence, always presents crossroads. We can go down the road of caving into persecution's pressure or choose the high road of **PRINCIPLED PERSEVERANCE**.

(We are not making the direct connection that Lorain was persecuted or abused. We are looking at how she demonstrates perseverance.)



Husband's reaction to her diagnosis

Lorain: Ironically enough, he said I'm glad that we know what's going on. Now we can deal with it.



Julie: How did “we” deal with it?

Lorain: Ultimately, I was the one dealing with it. It seemed hard for him to understand that when I came home from teaching school, the only thing I felt like doing was taking a nap. He didn't seem to understand that it was getting hard for me to clean the house. I had to call in a housekeeper. He didn't seem to understand that it was easier for me to walk if I took his arm to get support. He kind of almost pulled away from it. We were singing in a choir together and it was interesting that a lot of the other people were the ones who offered me their arm and offered to help me with whatever. It's like why isn't my husband doing this? I think little by little he was pulling away.

Julie: I know you ended up getting divorced unfortunately, which is horrific. Did the illness play a part of that?

Lorain: I specifically asked him when he said he couldn't deal with being married anymore. I said, “Does it have to do with my MS?” He said, “Yeah, I can't deal with it.” Ultimately it is for the best. Anything that happens to me since I gave my life to the Lord, anything that happens, I just take it as from the Lord. After I wept for half a day and everything, I said, “This is from the Lord.” It was so much for the better. I mean all the experiences I had, and still are having, are great.

That takes Christian maturity to be able to say that. The marriage vow - “in sickness or in health” - gets tested. Herein lies the secret of how certain people are able to push forward: Their perspective is bigger than their single experience or trial. When Lorain looks at it as being permitted from the Lord for her highest spiritual welfare, it allows her mindset to change in a positive way, which provides joy and peace.



However, not only did she lose a spouse, but her husband was the one with the health insurance, another gut punch when she was facing a potentially lifelong illness. He ended up having to pay her insurance costs for one year.



In such a circumstance, was it not appropriate to take him to court or mediation for a settlement? Is the Christian supposed to just accept that whatever they are offered in a divorce is what the Lord wants them to have?

There is no easy answer, as it depends on the circumstances. The reaction and motivation for going to court should not be retaliation. A situation as in Lorain's case, where he walked away and she had nothing and needed the care and help, then yes, it was appropriate to go to court in order to receive care. The covenant before God was to support each other. If someone is in this situation, we recommend spiritually-mature counsel from someone you trusted.

We should be careful of cloaking our retaliation under the cover of the “right thing.” We do not want to have a response that is not God-honoring. We must fight our desire for retaliation.



Know the WHY of principled perseverance under persecution:

1 Peter 3:13-16: (NASB) ¹³And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed...



Being zealous for what is good is part of the WHY. Persecution, for the right reasons, brings blessing. They persecuted Jesus first and we follow him.

...And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled: ¹⁵but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

The secret for a blessing from persecution lies in what our deepest focus is seeing.

If it is Christ, then we will always be ready to answer and not just answer, but answer with a spiritual mind:

¹⁶and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Just because we may be able to represent Christ and even “win” when falsely accused does not mean our conscience is spiritually driven. Persecution can spur a desire for retaliation if we are not spiritually-focused.



Retaliation is such a natural human response when being persecuted. To fight that, I need to have the mind of Christ. One of my challenges is that I am an emotional person and quick to react. I need to stop and ask myself, “What is God-honoring?” so I can be a witness to the person doing the attacking and guard my Christian character. That also makes me think of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. We need to be a witness to the person who's persecuting us, just as Jesus did.



Why are you not mad - how do you accept it?

Julie: Why aren't you mad? Why aren't you wondering why it wasn't somebody else?

Lorain: Well, I have to honestly say that I may have had some of those feelings sometimes. Why? The thing is, the support that I've gotten from my family, who are also Christian, and my dear friends, it's because of their encouragement and prayers, but I've had moments where I just don't like it (meaning the illness). For myself I feel like I'm not as bad off as some others that I know. I've known a number of people who have this condition, and you know when I compare myself to them, I feel like I'm not as bad off. I just keep plowing along and I'm not bedridden or in a wheelchair. I'm thankful for that.

Julie: You walk with a walker or cane? Or how do you walk?

Lorain: I use a walker a lot now. I want to try to get back to a cane, but I think the walker is safer. I've had several regimes of physical therapy, so if I stay true and honest to doing the exercises, I stay strong. I have to admit that sometimes I get lazy and don't want to do them. I get so fatigued sometimes.



Notice what she does. She compares herself to others but in a POSITIVE sense. Instead of, “How come that person can walk a mile and I can’t” - it is, “I am thankful I am not bedridden. I am better off than many people.” This is not to say every day is perfect and her attitude is rainbows and flowers 100 percent of the time. It means she experiences sadness, frustration and even anger, but lets it flow through her. She does not get stuck in it.



We want to be prepared since we cannot predict when persecution comes. Nobody likes the idea of being persecuted, and yet Jesus emphatically told us to prepare for that very thing.

Knowing why we need perseverance in persecution is one thing. Doesn't embracing it make it worse?

This is an important question. There is a major difference between embracing the emotional trauma of an experience and embracing the power and purpose of that experience. When we make the choice for the latter, we make the choice to feed our ability to persevere in Jesus' own footsteps. By embracing the power and purpose of the experience, we can let it flow through us.

In the first segment we learned that our WHY is to fight for that which is good and to “sanctify” Christ in our hearts. It is important that we feel this in our hearts and do not just acknowledge it intellectually.



Feel the WHY of principled perseverance under persecution.

Persecution can, and often does, come from those who are close - those whose influence is important:

Luke 21:16-19: (NASB) ¹⁶But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, ¹⁷and you will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸Yet not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your **endurance** <5281> (perseverance) you will gain your lives.

Perseverance: Strong's #5281 *hupomone*; from #5278; cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy

Strong's: #5278 *hupomeno*; to stay under (behind), i.e., remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e., bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere

It is more difficult to be persecuted by those who are closest to us. In Part I we said that all falsehood and misrepresentation, no matter how condemning and powerful, cannot stand against eternal truth and righteousness. We must keep this truth in front of us as we persevere through our experiences because it WILL come out eventually. Eventually may be a long time from now, but we need to stand for what is right even if the trial is coming from those who are close to us.



Christian perseverance is not just “taking it,” but it includes taking small steps forward to maintain righteousness and not retaliate as we move forward.



When persecuted by those who are close, principled perseverance stands firm as it stands solely for the name of Jesus!

This stand can be VERY challenging, especially in these particular circumstances. We have to be very sure we are standing for the spirituality of the matter and not the emotions of the matter.

In Part I we talked about how the definition of persevere is *to maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles or discouragement*.



What is your purpose and how do you keep going in tough times?

Lorain: My purpose is to be faithful to the Lord and be faithful in my Christian walk. It is to develop character and accept that the experience was allowed by the Lord. To not give up and to continue looking to Him for guidance. And that might sound like a simple thing but sometimes it's not. I have to admit it, sometimes you just want to say, “I can't do this anymore.” It's just tiring.

Julie: What happens when you say, I just can't do this anymore? How do you get yourself out of it and get yourself back up and moving?

Lorain: Pray. When you pray it makes all the difference in the world and why do we forget to do that sometimes? My other favorite Scripture is Philippians 4:13: *I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me*. That's my go-to Scripture when my legs feel like they're made out of lead, and I'm trying to walk from point A to B, get off the couch or whatever. When I get discouraged, singing a hymn to myself or playing whatever on the piano, it doesn't even have to have words; it just uplifts me.



Lorain found a Scripture that directly speaks to her condition. What does she need? Her muscles need strength. She gets strength from this verse to deal with her infirmity. We love when she asks, “Why do we forget to pray?” It is a great question and good practical advice. Prayer should be our continual lifeline.



There is much value in listening to someone who has a struggle that is just not going to go away. It is instructive to look at how they have had to deal with it for years, where they are now and how they got here. Here we see how this perseverance unfolds. Let us look at how they did this.



Here is the HOW! It is a fight!

Our perseverance finds its nourishment in the strength of God! We now focus on the “game face of a soldier” to cope with this perseverance task:

Ephesians 6:10-12: (NASB) *¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Lorain’s battle is not just against Multiple Sclerosis, but as with all Christians, it is also against spiritual wickedness in high places. Satan works on paralyzing her purpose and taking strength from her mind and her heart while she fights the disease that is ravaging her body in the same way.



Christian perseverance is the ability to withstand and plow through hardship and adversity with cheerfulness. It is the practice of standing up under the weight of circumstance, evil and opposition. As soldiers, we are overwhelmingly well-equipped for this challenge with the armor of God!



What would it be like without faith?

Lorain: I know several people who have it, have had it; they weren't people of faith and they did not fare so well. I think we're supposed to try to not only encourage others within our own church, but we should be a light unto all the world and try to spread that hope that we have. I've had, you know, different people outside of church make comments to me, “How could you be like this and you've got this, this thing going on?” I give them the same answer because of God in my life and faith.

In many cases a soldier is an inspiration. They have the rigors of what they are called to do, and they do it. Hopefully, we can be grateful for their fight because their fight is valuable for all of us. This is what Lorain is showing us.

As soldiers, we realize that our lives have a specific cause and that they will therefore be filled with many challenges. This IS what we signed up for:

1 Peter 4:12-13: (NASB) *¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation.*



TO: Inspiration@ChristianQuestions.com

People write into Christian Questions mad that since they became a Christian, their lives did not suddenly change into prosperity and healing. They thought Christianity would make everything better and easier. We have to



explain that things are better when we are mature in Christ, not when things in our temporal lives are better. These verses warn of *fiery ordeals* and *sufferings* of Christ.

Jesus spoke of Christianity being a banquet but never a picnic! Christ learned obedience through the things which he suffered. Why should we be any different? Christianity by definition requires perseverance; just ask Jesus.

Rejoicing is not necessarily being happy; rather, in this case it equates to trusting the *value* of trials and burdens, before we can see the *fruit* of the trials and burdens. Exultation comes later!

Just as we cannot see the beautiful, fruit-bearing orchard from a bag of seeds, so we have to persevere long enough, and cultivate long enough to produce and see our own fruit-bearing orchard from the seeds of our experiences.



Learning empathy, find blessings, be positive

Lorain: Another thing that has come out of this experience is that it makes me more empathetic to others who are going through different things. I like to believe my experience is going to help others in God's Kingdom. I think it's all about attitude. Not necessarily only for Christian people but for anybody who is dealing with an illness or a situation. You have to have a certain kind of attitude about it. Positive attitude. Positivity is a good thing in all kinds of situations. Be positive. Go for it.



A Scripture for Lorain, our fellow soldier in Christ, as she continues to persevere:

Colossians 1:9-12: (NASB) *⁹For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*

Lorain's difficult trial has been on our hearts and minds to uplift and encourage her. It requires perseverance on a level many of us do not even understand. She cannot get away from her experience; it is part of her physical being.

¹⁰*so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

This is what jumps out - Lorain is walking in a manner worthy of the Lord. God does not care how she physically walks; He cares how she spiritually carries herself through these experiences. By persevering she can do this and honor Him!

¹¹strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

What qualifies us *to share in the inheritance of the saints*? It does not matter what our physical person is, He cares for the *new creature* in us that is God-honoring. We pray that this Scripture helps Lorain, and all of us, to be stronger soldiers in Christ every day.



The power of singing

Lorain: There is something physical and mental that happens with singing. It's like endorphins, and especially when people sing together. When a person sings, they feel better. It's hard to explain but there's a physical thing that happens. When people are singing together, they're sharing a certain mood, a certain positivity. It's a feel-good thing to do. There are so many Scriptures that talk about singing unto the Lord. Make a joyful noise. In Ephesians 5:9, it says sing to one another with psalms and spiritual hymns.



Singing brings our heart to a deep and personal connection to our Heavenly Father. When we blend our hearts and voices together with others it raises the depth of praise to a whole new level.

Do you ever just sit on the couch at night in the dark and sing hymns to God? Those are prayers. King David understood this well when he sang and wrote many hymns to God.

**Perseverance Applied:
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PRINCIPLED PERSEVERANCE IS DIFFICULT. IT REQUIRES US TO STAND FOR THE HIGHEST CAUSE OF CHRIST, WITHOUT BENDING TO HOW WE FEEL IN THE PROCESS. THIS CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HAVING A SPIRITUAL MINDSET AND BEING PROTECTED AND ARMED WITH SPIRITUAL ARMOR.

We have to put ourselves in a spiritual frame of mind to deal with our issues. It might be the frustration and pain of persecution or the devastation of a chronic disease. Let us look to Lorain and her “soldiering through”; let us take those lessons and apply them so that we can be stronger in Christ, as Lorain showed us she is learning to be.

This is hard work! True Christianity does not have any chance to thrive unless we master the art of persevering.



Persevere in trials and persecution! What other life experiences need our focused perseverance?

For many of us our biggest challenge is our own human nature. When circumstances turn our lives upside down, we inevitably need to not only manage the trauma, but we also need to manage ourselves. For the rest of our time, we will examine the third kind of experience that develops Christian perseverance - loyalty. The deeper our loyalty is, the deeper our perseverance will be.

Merriam-Webster:

Loyal: adjective

1. unswerving in allegiance:

- a. faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government
- b. faithful to a private person to whom fidelity is due
- c. faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution or product



Loyalty is about “heart endurance” and not just lip service.

Many listeners may remember when we used to broadcast on the radio. Fred was our “man behind the board.” Fred’s wife, Sue, helped him gain a clear understanding of God’s plan and he dedicated his life to God and was baptized in 2003. Sue already had a son (Aaron) before meeting Fred. Our friend and brother in Christ lost his wife in 2011. We asked Fred to share his experience of how he is dealing with her death. Here is what happened in 2011:



How she died

Fred: She was 54. She died of what is known as a hemorrhagic stroke. Most of the time there is a stroke where it is from clotting. This is the opposite. It's where you just get bleeds. I guess the hemorrhagic is a lot less common.

Julie: She wasn't ill but suddenly one day this just happened? Where were you? Were you with her? Was she alone? What happened?

Fred: She was at her doctor's office when it happened. He instantly saw there was something wrong and got an ambulance and sent her to the hospital. We were talking until she came out of the MRI and she was unable to talk anymore. She went into a coma for two days and that was it.



Rick: This happened unexpectedly, and then within two or three days she was gone.

Fred: Yes. She had the stroke on Tuesday. Wednesday everybody was gathering around. Thursday morning, they had what is known as a family meeting. One of the things, I'm glad, is that she beforehand had a living will and a Do Not Resuscitate order. I asked the doctors if the condition required to pull life support had been met. They all said yes, so then I just said, okay let's do what she wants. Life support was pulled off by 9:00 o'clock in the morning, and it was actually 4:32 in the afternoon - that's when she passed.

(Source: Focus medica) Also called an Intracerebral hemorrhage or ICH, it is an emergency condition in which a blood vessel in the brain ruptures and causes bleeding inside the brain. There are more than 200,000 cases per year in the United States, typically in people age 50 and older. There is no known cure.

Our loyalty and faithfulness to God through Christ is tested in a crisis like this.

Know the WHY of passionate perseverance - we are servants of God with our physical being:

2 Corinthians 6:3-7: (NASB) ³*giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, ⁴but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much **endurance** <5281> (this is the same word also translated as "perseverance"), in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, ⁵in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,*



Paul lists all of his physical experiences, showing us how to persevere. This is what God put before him. Paul was not complaining about how bad off he was, instead he was saying how he was blessed.

Loyalty requires deep and passionate perseverance in the hard physical experiences of life. Why? Because God must be glorified in every experience of our life. Do we keep getting up?



Feel the WHY of passionate perseverance - we are servants of God with our spiritual minds:

⁶*in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the holy spirit, in genuine love, ⁷in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,*

(Source: Biblical commentary David Guzik with Adam Clarke in quotes) *...by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left* - The idea of on the right hand and on the left is of holding both offensive and defensive weapons. It probably has in mind "both advancing and being attacked." "Particularly, the shield and the sword; the former on the left arm, the latter on the right hand. We have the doctrine of truth and the power of God, as an armor to protect us on all sides, everywhere, and on all occasions."

We have to feel that engagement in that battle and be loyal to that which we are called to do. Loyalty requires deep, passionate perseverance in the spiritually-driven areas of our lives. We must tenaciously grow into spiritual maturity so we can pass it on to others as we go. By God's grace, we grow and can share our experiences. Lorain expressed this thought. Let's return to Fred and see how his experience develops.



How do you cope with such a sudden loss

Julie: So, you wake up with this woman, this love of your life, on Tuesday morning. You go your separate ways. You say goodbye, and things are never the same. How do you go through that?

Fred: My faith has helped me immensely, knowing that this isn't the end. There is something better in store for her, for me and for the whole world of mankind. There are times when that is all you have. The depression you go through and the sense of loss - it's almost like half of yourself just got cut away. All you have is a belief that this is not the end. As horrible as it is, there's something better coming.

Passion supports us through our personal and private experiences, as well as our persecution experiences, as well as our physical and spiritual experiences:

2 Corinthians 6:8-10: (NASB) ⁸by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; ⁹as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, ¹⁰as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

These pairs of opposites are interesting. The world would look at Paul with one part of the pair - having nothing; but from God's perspective, Paul had all things. The world would say dishonor, evil report, sorrowful - but God would see it as honor, good report, always rejoicing, and so on. We want to look at our experiences through God's eternal perspective rather than our own short-term, immediate one.

Change the eyes with which we see our trial!

Loyalty is only possible through passionate perseverance. It reveals the many deliverances of a true disciple that will result in thankfulness to God for those deliverances.



Grief, nine years later

Rick: Do you go through, nine years later, that kind of moment again and again?

Fred: Sometimes, but not as often as I used to. A famous man once said, there will come a time when a smile will come to your face before the tear comes to your eye. That's true. With Aaron, we'll talk about it. We'll laugh and smile about something that she would do or something she would say. It's comforting. *You don't get over it. You come to terms with it.* You realize the reality. The five stages of grief are real. I was in denial, and I bargained. I was angry.

Rick: Were you angry with God?



Fred: Yeah. Yeah, angry with God. Angry with her. It's a normal part of the process.

Julie: Angry with her, why?

Fred: She's gone, and I want her with me. Then you get to the final stage, and that's acceptance. She's gone. The acceptance is where you can cherish the memories. She wanted to spend the rest of her life with me and I with her, but it was time. The Lord said now it's time.

What saves a man is to take a step. Then another step. — C.S. Lewis

The five stages of grief are real, and many people need to travel through them.

We see in Fred the **game face of the farmer**, the face of patience, knowledge, hard work and consistency. It is the face of steady discipline and compassion. Another aspect of a farmer is that they cultivate. In the natural world, they cultivate by using the sun, water and minerals from the ground to create a healthy crop. As Christians, we need to spiritually cultivate our hearts and minds so that we may acquire growth and maturity in Christ by bearing the fruit of the spirit.



2 Timothy 2:6-7: (NASB) *‘The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*



How long until this level of acceptance

Julie: When were you able to smile with her memory instead of crying?

Fred: For me, it took about five years, and I know it's not a set schedule for everybody. It's different for different people. It took about five years before I could have that acceptance and start the moving-on process. There were times I'd be in a store or out in public and see somebody walking away without seeing the person's face, and I'd have to do a double take. They looked just like her. Then it would take a few moments, and I'd say, "Oh wait, no, that's not her."

The process is difficult and painful, but we must keep working through it.





Our lifetime has seasons, and a farmer knows how to best make use of those seasons, persevering through each of them. We are truly blessed to have our highest loyalty to our Almighty God and His son! It gives our lives purpose and beauty despite and because of our difficulties.

**Passionate perseverance proves loyalty.
How do we find the focus to make that happen?**

All we have talked about over this two-part series leads to this answer. The bottom line of perseverance is this: Our loyalty is bound to God's wisdom and plan. We must apply ourselves to any and every tool necessary that will help us persevere, help us move forward through every experience. It comes down to looking up.

A farmer is one who cultivates full-grown plants beginning with small seeds. God asked Moses in Exodus 4:2, *What is that in thine hand?* We need to move forward with what is in our hand. Often it is with the small seeds of our experiences that need to be cultivated and developed over time through perseverance. These will make us faithful and glorify God no matter how hard the growth experiences of those seeds might be.



This next Scripture is for Fred and seems to go with his experience and his game face of a farmer; one who cultivates beginning with small seeds (our experiences):

2 Peter 1:5-8: (NASB) ⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, **perseverance <5281>**, and in your **perseverance <5281>**, godliness, ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a planting and cultivating *process* in this text having to do with perseverance on a spiritual level that will go on throughout our lifetime.



Frustration and loneliness

Rick: Did it ever get to the point where, when you saw others who still had their spouse, did you ever feel resentful toward them, like how come they get to be together and we're not? Was that ever, or is this still a challenge for you?

Fred: Yeah. It's like, I don't know if I was resentful, or if I wish she was here now because you get the loneliness. Loneliness is an underappreciated emotion. It's a lot more destructive than people give it credit for because it's not like being stabbed with a sharp knife; it's almost like being cut with a dull rusty blade. It's just grinding again, and again, and again. It feels like it's never going to let up.



Right now, think of the person who is most precious to you. Imagine them suddenly no longer here and you unable to do anything about it. Put yourself in Fred's shoes for a moment and feel what he went through. This is happening to millions of people around the world, including so many premature deaths from COVID-19. People are struggling like Fred was. What do we say to them?

One way to help lessen the impact of loneliness is to make sure loneliness is not the centerpiece of our life. Think of it as one of many experiences we have to go through in life, but do not let our life revolve around the loneliness. This is hard. We need to look around to find people that can inspire us. One place is to look at those in the Bible who have persevered.

Hebrews 11 tells us about the lives of many of those who lived and persevered in ancient Israel.



We are told to look at these examples to show us what overcoming looks like:

Hebrews 12:1: (NASB) *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

We first look around us because it is easy to identify with others who have gone through similar experiences and emotions. We can find inspiration in the lives of both biblical figures and those in the modern day. Understand and feel their effort. This will help us to understand what our effort needs to be.



Getting help through grinding loneliness

Fred: I've learned through counseling. One thing is, if you need help, get help. I think too many people - I can't remember the English writer who said, "We live lives of quiet desperation." I did that for a while. One of the Scriptures that kind of triggered me to reach out, was *it is not good for man to be alone* (Genesis 2:18). I realized I was building a wall between the outside world and me, retreating in. That's when I knew I had to get help, not just professional help, but to reach out to my brethren. You have the wonderful resource of brethren. Some have experienced that loneliness; others haven't. But people are there. And especially in a Christian fellowship, they're willing and want to help anybody. Reach out. Reach out to your friends, your family, your faith. What's that Scripture? You *bear one another's burdens* (Galatians 6:2).

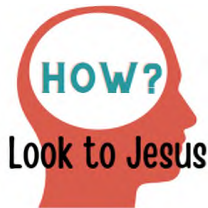




It is important to note that sometimes no matter how hard we try, our brains get emotionally damaged with the trauma and shock of loss, and we need to seek professional help. There is nothing unscriptural or shameful about this. This is an appropriate, God-honoring action.



There are times we misrepresent perseverance. We cannot run a marathon if we have fallen and broken our leg, no matter how hard we have trained ahead of time! This is not perseverance. We need to get help to heal the leg before we can resume running. It IS perseverance to power through the necessary rehab for however long it takes to reestablish our health - even if there is no longer a marathon in our future. We are not supposed to just power through everything that is in front of us. If something is broken, God does not want us to break it further. He wants us to honor Him by taking care of that which He gave us. If our mind has a disconnect or a trauma that has upended us, we have to take care and honor God through the healing. Then we share this experience with others, helping them along the way.



While we can identify with Jesus at times, we should also look to him with awe because he is the writer and perfecter of our faith:

Hebrews 12:2: (NASB) ²*fixing our eyes on Jesus*, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- He embraced *the joy God set before him* - this is how he persevered. Jesus was focused on the joy of the eternal vision of being again with his Father, rather than his immediate pain and suffering.
- This joy carried him through the horror of the cross - do not doubt that the cross and the night prior were horrors.
- This joy lessened the pain of the utter human shame put upon him. He hated the shame of being called a blasphemer of his beloved Father, who he had lived his entire life honoring and obeying.
- This joy delivered him to the right hand of the throne of God, once again back with his Heavenly Father and exalted higher than he was before.

He went through the hardest of trials and was blessed with the highest of privileges! He persevered in doing the will of God. And not to just do it, but to LOVE doing it. That is Christian perseverance!



Learning to be a "go to" person

Fred: It actually brings tears of joy to my heart, to know that there are people that you just call, and say I need help, and that's all you have to say. It's *what can I do*. Now I'm at a point in my life where I'm hopefully trying the best I can to be that person that people will call. That's why I wanted to do this, is the fact that I know this experience. A couple years back, in a testimony (service



in church), I said, “I need you.” Just saying that helps so much because it's freeing to know that you don't have to keep it bottled up anymore. My advice to anybody who is going through an experience like this is: don't go through it alone.

He advised so many times in this interview to reach out. Fred is naturally an introvert. It is hard for him to reach out, but he learned. Because he learned, he was blessed.



What is helpful in grief's initial stages

Fred: I understand the fact that people would feel awkward. You don't need to have words of wisdom; just be there. Just *be* there. Just call. “How are you doing?” There's a brother we all know, I'll just use his first name - Mark - who says, “Let's go for a walk.” We do that now. We will just go different places. Going out and getting fresh air, that's very helpful. It's almost like with Job. He asked God the question WHY. God says: Look around, get some perspective, all of this wasn't done by accident. Job is very inspirational because he knew the loss and asked the question. I think all of us who go through similar experiences ask, why did this happen? It happened because the Lord said it was time for her to come home. And it's time for you to have different experiences. That is very comforting to know that there is a great design. We are a part of it.

There is a lot of wisdom in Fred's observations. He recognizes and embraces that it was God's timing. He learned to be good with that.

Notice the similarity between Lorain and Fred:
Lorain wants to be a light unto the world
and to spread the hope she has in a
sympathetic way. Fred wants to encourage others
through his experience. Both stand ready to reflect
God's love and mercy.



We do not identify with God; we reverence God.



1 LOOK UP to Him who is truly mighty
and acknowledge His power and wisdom.

Isaiah 40:26-31: (NASB) ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.





To get perspective on God, look up at the universe around us. It is MASSIVE, it is miraculous, and God made it! Get a sense of His great power.



God's understanding, God's way and God's perseverance are eternal! **TAKE NOTICE** of all these things.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God? ²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.



BELIEVE that He is an endless power source compared to those in the prime of life and to those who are mighty in the eyes of men.

God opens us up to spiritual perseverance:

²⁹He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.

³⁰Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly,



Trade in your old source of strength and **PUT ON** God's strength and God's perseverance

It is only then that we can mount up with wings and not become weary:

³¹Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.



It looks effortless when eagles soar. The eagle makes slight physical adjustments to allow the wind to keep him up. Even though it looks effortless, it is not. It is understanding the power and force of the wind and using it to soar above the troubles. Just as with us, we need to learn from our experiences, persevere and soar above our troubles with the help of the Lord.

And no, we CANNOT do it alone. We need to use the holy spirit, which is God's power and influence, in order to persevere. This is why it is so important for us to change the source of our strength!



God loves me

Rick: What you seem to be telling us again and again is, accept God's providence and have faith that it's going to work out.



Fred: Yes. He's in total control. He loves me. He loves me so much that He's got me by the hand; He's not letting go. That's ultimately what brings you through, is knowing that this is not the end. He has an incredible amount of wisdom, and love, and power and mercy. He's not petty or spiteful. He didn't cause this to happen to be spiteful. He did it because in His own infinite wisdom, it was time for her to go. There's something I won't understand, like, why was it time? I don't know. I won't know until I get on the other side.

Perseverance Applied: Perseverance Applied: Perseverance Applied:



**THE PASSIONATE PERSEVERANCE OF LOYALTY
TO GOD AND THE CAUSE OF CHRIST SURROUNDS US
– IF WE ARE WALKING ON THE RIGHT PATH.
DRINK IN THE EXAMPLES, REDOUBLE YOUR EFFORTS
AND STAND FIRMLY FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT
THINGS!**

It comes down to putting ourselves into the position of saying we will be loyal to God no matter what happens in our life.

The perseverance of loyalty in action:

Romans 8:37-39: (NASB) ³⁷*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

That is the passionate perseverance of loyalty to our Father. This is what we must seek every day no matter what our experiences might be. Persevere in a godly way!

*So, how can I persevere when life gets tough?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on January 18, 2021

**Ep. 1161: What Does Honoring Your Father
and Mother Look Like?**

Bonus Material and Study Questions



A failure is not always a mistake. It may simply be the best one can do under the circumstances. The real mistake is to stop trying. — B.F. Skinner

The game face of the Apostle Paul is the face of loyalty, example, hardship and victory:

2 Timothy 2:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰*For this reason I **endure <5278>** all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.*

Whoever or wherever we are, our game face of loyalty is to God and the brotherhood:

¹¹*It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with him, we will also live with him; ^{1f}we **endure <5278>**, we will also reign with him; If we deny him, he also will deny us;*

Our perseverance can only breed victory if we keep it focused on God above.

We have seen Christian personal and practical perseverance developed in trial and affliction:

1 Corinthians 10:13: (NASB) *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

We have seen Christian principled perseverance developed through persecution:

John 16:31-33: (NASB) ³¹*Jesus answered them, do you now believe? ³²Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. ³³These things I have spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*

We have seen Christian passionate perseverance developed through tests of loyalty:

Philippians 3:7-11: (NASB) ⁷*But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death; ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

For us to be able to change the way we think about the process of an experience, we need to know where that experience is to lead us (the WHY of perseverance).

Following Jesus promises us a new destination, a new path and a new way to think:

2 Corinthians 5:16-19: (NASB) ¹⁶*Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer. ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (new way to think) ¹⁸Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (new destination) ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation (new path).*



Dealing with burdens is tough! Beginning with the end in mind means that even the heaviest of our burdens can be put in the context of higher purpose - they now have a WHY attached to them. While this step does not lighten the load, it does open our eyes to hope.

When is persecution used in a positive sense?

Persecution: Strong's #1377, *diwkw dioko dee-o'-ko*; ...to pursue (literally or figuratively); by implication, to persecute - ensue, follow (after), given to, (suffer) persecute(-ion), press forward.

We normally see this in a negative way, though it can be actually used positively. Some examples:

Romans 9:31: (KJV) *But Israel, which **followed** <1377> after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

Romans 12:13: (KJV) *Distributing to the necessity of saints; **given** <1377> to hospitality.*

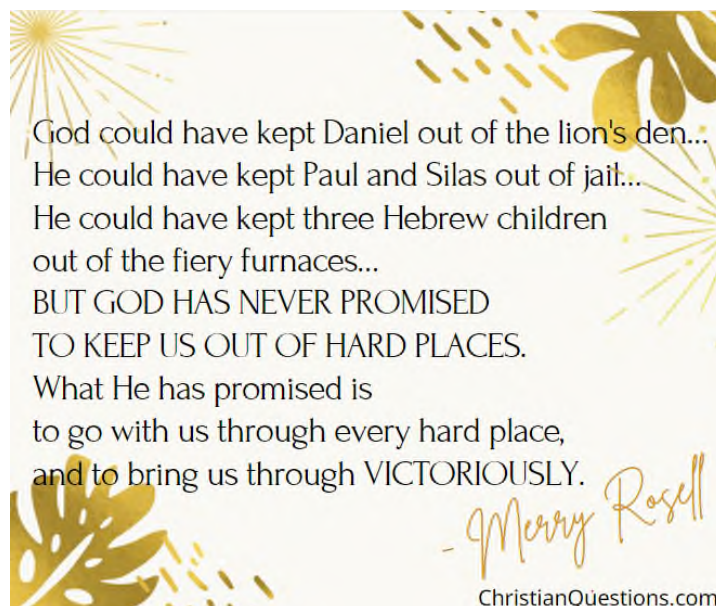
Romans 14:19: (KJV) *Let us therefore **follow after** <1377> the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

Philippians 3:12: (KJV) *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I **follow after** <1377>, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14: (KJV) *I **press** <1377> toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:15: (KJV) *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever **follow** <1377> that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

1 Timothy 6:11: (KJV) *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and **follow after** <1377> righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1160: How Can I Persevere When Life Gets Tough? (Part II)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1160-perseverance/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What are three “game faces,” or types of perseverance, as seen in Scripture? How do they differ? (See 2 Timothy 2:3-7)
2. What does it mean to have “principled perseverance”? How can it help us persevere through persecution? What happens if we *do not* have principled perseverance? (See Hebrews 12:3-4)
3. If we are zealous for what is good and still are persecuted, what do we gain? What is essential for us to do to avoid fear and intimidation? What is often the most difficult persecution? (See Luke 21:16-19, 1 Peter 3:13-16)
4. What can we do when we are struggling to get ourselves back into the right mindset? Where do we find nourishment for our perseverance? (See Ephesians 6:10-12, 1 Peter 4:12-13)
5. What is required to have principled perseverance? What do Colossians 1:9-12 mean to you? Are you *joyously giving thanks to the Father* in the midst of your trials?
6. For what must we have *much endurance* in 2 Corinthians 6:3-7? The surprising change of tone in verse 6 means we must have *much endurance* in what other aspects of our lives?
7. How can the sets of opposites in 2 Corinthians 6:8-10 help when our loyalty to God is tested during all of our experiences? What do these opposite pairs help us to see, and how do they feed our passionate perseverance?
8. How can we cultivate passionate perseverance to help lessen the negative impacts of our most difficult experiences? Are you growing in the process described in 2 Peter 1:5-8? Where are you doing well, and what needs more focus and work?
9. How can we find inspiration in Jesus’ response to his experiences when we feel discouraged or like we cannot go on? How can we look to the *cloud of witnesses*, both ancient and those in our lives now, for help in these times? (See Hebrews 12:1,2)
10. How can we use our reverence of God to develop our passionate perseverance? How do the beautiful Scriptures in Isaiah 40:26-31 speak to you?