



Rector's Blog

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PERSEVEER...PERSEVER...PERSEVEAR....OH! I GIVE UP....

I have just finished watching *I Claudius* on BBC I-Player. It was a blockbuster series in the 1970s with a star-studded cast that follows the fortunes of the first Roman Emperors (after the Republic) through the lens of one of them, Claudius. This main character has many things against him in the perfection obsessed Rome, where might was right. He could not speak nor walk with ease.

But he is the one that survives intrigues and plots and outright rebellion to become Emperor almost by accident. His nephew Caligula who was quite unstable and did numerous outrageous things, was murdered by Republicans who wanted the end of the Empire. What they didn't account for was the Praetorian Guard who were in the pay of the Emperor and who had a self-interest in a new Emperor being appointed. They therefore declare Claudius the next in line and the new Emperor – much against his own wishes!

Claudius then reigns for many years to come. He persevered.

Perseverance is a word that Paul, Peter and James all extol in their letters to the churches.

Paul: *“glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5)*

Peter: *“make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.” (2 Peter 1:5-9)*

James: *“whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4)*

What they have in common is a sense that the Christian life will have its challenges and struggles and that to carry on with patience builds the Christian character. If we approach our calling with patience, determination, prayer and humility then we will see progress and growth in our own character as well as fruit in the kingdom over time. More people coming to faith, increased numbers, more commitments and baptisms, people's lives transformed and healings and lives made whole. Positive answers to prayer. In time.

There is a story that John Wimber told about a young man who attended one of his training sessions on healing prayer. Wimber led the Vineyard Church in the US in the 1980s and when he visited the UK inspired a charismatic movement in the church here (from which New Wine amongst other movements were born). He was a jovial but quietly spoken pastor that could speak with authority at times. The training completed for that day, the participants were dispatched to "give it a go".

Wimber's own story was that he ministered in things of the Spirit for 2 years finding no fruit, no healings, until he was at the end of his tether and he cried out to the Lord that it had all been a waste of time. It was then the explosion of healings happened!

This young man came back to Wimber after a week and said "Pastor, I was at your training last week. Tried it. It didn't work!"

Wimber just took one look at him and said, "Try it 1000 times and then we will talk..."

John Wimber knew the discipline of perseverance, to keep on going, not losing heart. He also knew the discipline of humility. We are not the arbiters of the Kingdom of God. The clue is in the name. It's God's sovereign choice, what, when and how much.

But we stick with Him and the Kingdom will come. Aspects of Heaven will be seen on earth.

Just as Jesus taught us to pray.
Let's persevere, together.
Amen

Your brother in Christ

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