

GLORY DAYS! - Today, we hear about another important quality - the power of perseverance! A dictionary definition of “perseverance” includes: persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success ... the ability to pursue a goal/passion over time and stick with it when encountering difficulties/set-backs. Words associated with "perseverance" include: tenacity, resolve, determination, resolute, single-mindedness, dedication, diligence ...

And those are precisely the personal/spiritual qualities that we hear about in today’s passage from the Acts of the Apostles. We know that Paul and Barnabas formed a really effective team in evangelizing their world --- but, it can be easy to forget that it was not always easy or successful!! They experienced real struggles --- being looked at skeptically and being tossed out of synagogues; being shipwrecked; being misunderstood by the apostolic community in Jerusalem!

And so, when we heard in today’s passage that “they strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying: ‘It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God’ --- they were speaking from their own personal experiences! And, their perspective was really important, too: they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he (God) had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles”!

Throughout time there have been many stories of perseverance - such as:

Thomas Edison: He was reported to have said while still experimenting: "I have not failed; I’ve just found 10,000 ways to make a light bulb that won’t work."

Walt Disney: As a young man, he was fired from the local newspaper where he worked as a cartoonist. His boss believed he lacked creativity. An early animation company of his failed, leaving him in dire financial difficulties. Despondent and with nothing to lose, Walt Disney traveled to Hollywood. There, too, things were not easy. He faced a barrage of rejection, was told he would never make it, and that Mickey Mouse – his passion project – was destined to fail. Well ...

That same kind of perseverance is also a necessary and powerful quality to cultivate in living the spiritual life -- - when things at work are tough; when meaningful relationships become difficult; when the experience of prayer does not seem very fulfilling and when experiencing relationship with God seems distant.

The great temptation – that the evil one would love for us to give in to – is to just give up! But, as faith-filled disciples of Jesus, we will not give up --- we will persevere!