

Throwing Off Everything That Hinders

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the importance of community, prayer, and God's grace in overcoming personal struggles and achieving spiritual growth.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Persevering Faith", "Christian Unity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of persevering in faith despite struggles, failures, and shortcomings. It encourages a focus on Jesus as the ultimate example of endurance and faith, reminding believers to support and encourage one another in their spiritual journey. The speaker shares personal reflections on his own weaknesses and the need for God's grace to sustain him, highlighting the significance of unity, love, and mercy within the community of believers.

Transcript

Welcome, thank you for joining us, wherever you may be, I don't know, Albania, Texas, or Europe, wherever. We really do appreciate you taking the time to be part of it. And I hope that you will not only stay with me for the next few minutes and I'll talk about something from God's Word, but also stay with us a little further to pray with us.

We'll be sharing prayer requests, and then we'll make small groups, two by two, three by three, in the living room, kitchen, wherever you are, hotel room. You can sit there, eat, or whatever you want to do, but do join us praying for these items. That's the reason we are here tonight.

This is our prayer meeting night, every Friday, or the first Friday of the month. Of course, it's moved to another day today. Thank you for being with us.

For our encouragement and for the time we spend in prayer, I'd like you to look at a couple of verses in the book of Hebrews 12. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with patience the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such opposition from the sinful men, so that ye will not grow weary and lose heart. In some ways, I wish I could say I'm able to live by these verses and keep my eyes on Jesus and I'm an overcomer, everything is perfect. No, as a matter of fact, three hours before the prayer meeting, I was so tired, jet lag and all that, I was sleeping, and I woke up thinking, tonight's a prayer meeting, I wish it was not.

And then I find myself trying to figure out a way. I check my throat, my ear, my nose, if I can make some excuse. Say to Danny or David, John or somebody, you know.

I had somebody ask me a question. Wow, Gospel of Asia, your people with such spiritual vibrance and commitment, do you people have any failure? Anybody end up in trouble, kind of a question. And I said, yeah, you can't believe the number of people that go through struggles and difficulties and overcome by temptation and failures and discouragement.

And I told a couple of illustrations. But later I thought, maybe the best would happen, I should share with him my problems and struggles, so it's not somebody else I use as an example, or somebody failed in their life, but still moving on. You know, God is not looking for strong, able, sharp, top-notch people to fulfill his plan on earth.

I find myself having to repent often in my private prayer times, because when I teach and preach, I end up looking back over the day I lived and things I said, and I kind of feel like that message can make people think that this is the ideal, this is the kind of heroes God is looking for, and I am one of those people. The truth of the matter is that if somebody else could have preached the same thing to me, I would be weeping and repenting. And then I realized again how weak I am.

And it's like climbing a mountain. You go up 300 meters, then you look down and see some people struggling and trying to crawl up, and you say, what a creep, can't you move faster? But then you look up and you see you've got a million miles to go. And so wherever we are in our life journey, like I said this evening, I was trying to figure out a way to sleep longer and to get away, and I realized once again the struggle we have as human beings in this journey.

And the problem is we find ourselves pretending what we are not by either our sharing or preaching or our attitude or whatever. The truth of the matter is inside we all are the same. And I think I like what Danny said.

These missionaries he talked about, dear me, they are facing the same problems we face. Loneliness and discouragement, attack from the enemy, children are behaving crazy, and our expectations fail, and physical illness, and all kinds of things. And we are not exempted from the struggles people face.

And I think usually we end up talking about the communists, the religious people, or all these stuff to challenge people to live for God and all those things, which I do often. But really Hebrews chapter 12, it's quite interesting. It says, therefore, since all these people are watching you, you do this thing.

Of course, you know, you study the Bible. Therefore means you go back to chapter 11, and there you find the names of all these people that you talk about, people like Abraham. He lied more than once.

Someone who was willing to uproot, move away from his home, living with such luxury and comfort and everything, and he walked away from everything, obeying God. Then you think having known God in that way made such huge sacrifice to go to a place where he had no clue except by faith he was doing all this

and leaving everything. And then he will be so strong that he will have no problems.

But, you know, he was so self-centered that he was least concerned about what will happen to his wife and said, you know, you better tell that you are my sister. I mean, what a husband. It's kind of strange.

And then you see he move on, and then, you know, God promises stuff that nothing happens. Then he resorts to do something that was not the smartest thing to do, you know, getting his mail, and then coming to God and say, God, will you please bless my son? God says, no, I can't because of the product of the flesh. And, you know, he made enough mess of his life.

God could easily say, well, you know, I don't think it's going to work. I'll find somebody else. But the incredible patience and grace of God that God says he's my friend.

He would not abandon him and continue to have mercy and grace. And we are told, consider that, consider Abraham. If you feel like you can't measure up, and especially this is true, you know, there are seasons in your life you are so vibrant, so on fire and milked and praying and fasting, giving and sacrifice, all those things, but all of a sudden you come to a place, you know, in the valley, and you don't understand what's going on and look like nothing seems to work, and then you start questioning yourself, saying that maybe all that thing I did and everything was a mistake, it was all zeal without godliness, and here I am, it just don't work.

Then you start trying to figure out how to make things up by getting into work, more prayer, more fasting, and more giving gospel tracts, and all these kind of things. Then the whole thing is getting more messed up. But what we need to do is understand, God is trying to tell us, I'll wait 25 years, when you come to the place, there's nothing left in you, then I will do the work.

But those years of struggle, of learning, is part of the plan of God. That's where I need to recognize. And, you know, someone like Jacob, God promised before he was even born, the older will serve the younger, but he just couldn't trust God with it, and he must figure things out.

He was a brilliant schemer, that's his name to begin with. But for so many reasons, God could simply walk away, but he wouldn't. See, that's where I need to understand, the plan of God is not fulfilled based on my success or failure, it's God's mercy and grace.

As long as I just keep doing what he told me to do, and don't look into me all the time. Somebody said, you know, one look at self, and ten look at Jesus is the way to survive. And so, when we look at these people, I mean, like Enoch, and Noah, and Moses, and Joseph, and Gideon, and Samson, Ruth, she was a Dalit, low caste.

David, well, those are the names that are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. It says, think about these people, but then, look unto Jesus. For me, I really wish I could say this to you, after 44 years of serving Christ, I'm stronger and able, and you know, passionate for the lost world, and committed for more prayer.

I am in some ways, but I find that the struggle I always had, the selfishness, you know, love for position, power, and all this stuff still hangs around. And I find the grace of God continue to sustain me when I say, Lord, I'm not able to do it on my own. And we are in the year 2013, am I right? Well, I'm getting older.

So when you look forward to this year, I was thinking today, the year that, just behind us, 2012, and I was thinking, you know, the year began, the December and January, I remember, 2012, I remember, I was

absolutely frightened about the whole year. Frightened in the sense, you know, how things are going to work out. The challenges, the opportunities, and how we plan things, and all these things.

And I had a couple of leaders meetings that was extremely hard and difficult. I felt guilty for the harsh statements I made to the leaders, trying to make things work, and all these different things. And during the year, I went through struggles, thinking how things are going to work out.

Are we really reaching the lost? How things are working out? And my own personal struggles. But, you know, as we came to the end of the year, I was so amazed that, honestly, I did not know maybe 30, 40 percent of the result of the mission field. When I began to get all the information, I was absolutely shocked beyond imagination how amazing the way things worked out.

The number of people came to Christ, and the churches planted, and the ministry expanded. And once again, I realized, it's not by power, it is not by might, it is not by striving, and it is by His Spirit. But then, the question is this.

The other day, in one of the prime meetings, I mentioned this statement, you know, this morning's prime meeting, the star prime meeting. In the final analysis, I said, you are alone. It's you who make the decision.

So I had a young man send an email. I was just getting ready to leave the office, and I opened my phone, and here's the email. He said, Uncle KP, you made the statement, I'm a little confused about it.

I'm alone, and I had to figure this out. And he explained his question. So I said, yeah, I need to talk to him.

So I quickly called him, and he came up, and I said, yeah, I got your email. I said, you know, the truth of the matter is, that is just one side of the truth. And I explained to him, I will not be able to make it in this life without you, without the body of Christ.

We become like Jesus with the brothers and sisters in the body. It is written in the book of Ephesians chapter 4. And I look back over the years of my journey, the many, many times of horrible discouragement, personal failures and struggles, I don't think I would have made it this far without others' encouragement. Either a book I read, or somebody I talked to on email, or somebody's prayer, and all these things.

Just this morning, I had a call from some other country, and this brother said, you know, I had this strange dream. And the dream was that you were speaking to a very large number of people. It's a very huge, big crowd.

Then a whole bunch of snakes are coming toward you. Well, you know, dreams are dreams. Maybe you ate too many hamburgers.

No, you didn't eat hamburgers. But the thing was, he said the next three days he was praying, partially fasting. And that touched me deep.

I mean, a simple dream that he would come to himself to pray for me. And so, one of the sad things about my life in this journey, especially as a leader in God's work, it is the times I fail to encourage others, and be a source of bringing hope and encouragement. None of us will ever stay on an even scale in this journey.

There's always going to be seasons and dips, whether we know it or not. Things happen totally unexpected. And people make up stories or misunderstand you, and health fails and all this.

How are we going to make it? This is the reason why I've been forever fighting for being the community of Christ. And caring for one another and loving one another. Because what is really in the end matters.

It is how we end the race. And when Jesus looked at Peter, Jesus knew exactly how many times he's going to deny his master. And all the many, many ups and downs and failures he'll have.

Why? Because Jesus knew Judas, it says, from the beginning, who he was. And so he knew exactly what Peter is going to do. A time will come, he'll say, yeah, that Jesus, I never met him, I don't know who he's talking about.

And then he used a bunch of curse words to make sure they believe him. But you'll find in the end, when he leaves Christ and run away, the Lord goes after him. And there's not a question asked.

Now Peter, I want to talk to you. Yeah, Jesus. And Peter keeps his head down.

He's going to abuse me and beat me up and point out all the sins I committed. He asked this one question. Do you love me? And you know, we think approval from God and affirmation comes from us fulfilling all God's expectations, succeeding on every point, and doing a whole lot of work, and fasting and praying, and everything.

That's all neat. It's a good idea. But really, his affirmation comes simply with one simple fact.

Do you know my grace? Do you understand? I'm not judging you based on how many good things you did, how many times you failed. I'm just I am. And look into my eyes.

And when you see who Jesus is, his mercy, and I wonder why Jesus didn't reveal to anyone who Judas was, if I were in his place? Good night. I'm glad that I'm not in his place. But knowing that here's a guy who is eating food with me, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and he's going to kill me.

He's going to betray me. And then he's stealing money every single day. But Jesus didn't say a word.

Even the very last second, none of the disciples knew what was happening. They thought he was going out to do some errands. But Jesus knew.

And I think because Jesus hoped maybe even the last second he would say, Lord, I goofed up, and I need your grace. He didn't have to kill himself. And to protect his dignity, his honor, and the Lord protected him and loved him.

And I think where I need to understand, I need to understand this year, 2013, I can talk tonight all night long about Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, and this tribal group, that tribal group, and this is happening, this is happening. I mean, it's all true. And the challenges are enormous.

But I'm telling you, I will not be able to survive through this year unless your prayer, and your love, your encouragement, your kindness, and your mercy is shown to me. Because I'm weak, and I must do that for you. I used to be hypercritical of mothers who have their little kids and children, they don't often show up enough to serve God and all those things.

And one day my wife said, you know, you are terrible. I said, me? I'm a saint! I'm just kidding. She said, you forget when we had our kids, Danny and Sarah, the endless nights I was up, and you were snoring.

Of course, I changed diapers and all those things, just to make you feel I did some things. And she said, you forget. She said, I'm German, and I'm built strong, and I you just don't understand.

My physical stamina may be an exception in some ways, but you don't understand the agony a mother goes through just to watch one little creature. And you know, then I watched my children getting their children. And I used to think, I'm going to throw the kids in the corner and do something else.

But then I realized, you see, and all of a sudden, not, I mean, long ago I understood this. As a matter of fact, I have an incredible amount of compassion and mercy toward mothers, those who must take a risk. You're not a joint family here.

Everybody coming and taking the kids and all those things. And often, I mean, you see, so what do I have to do? My prayer should not be, oh, God, commit to her to get up and serve you. I must say, oh, God, give her grace to have enough strength to raise the child and be merciful.

And I think there's such amount of love and kindness among us, bringing food and taking care of things and cleaning house and all those. Those are reflections. But what I'm trying to tell you, yeah, we have maybe Himalaya-sized challenge this year.

An opportunity like never in our history. But, we will never be able to accomplish one thing unless we survive. Unless the heart pump the blood.

The hands and legs and eyes and ears will be useless. And the heart is basically love, encouragement, mercy, forgiveness, patience, endurance, stand the gap, less, you know, being critical. You will see people fail.

You will see I fail. And, you know, ask God, is this something that I should deal with? Let it be. Give space for people to fail and not meet your expectations.

And I'm saying this because this is a message to my own heart. Do everything you can to pray and encourage. When they fail, they don't need you to kick them.

They need you to, you know, when I'm down, I mean, I am sometimes. All I want is somebody pull me up and say, you can make it. I don't need somebody preaching to me.

One time I did that to my wife, you know. And she said, I know more Bible words about than you know. What she needed was, she said, all I want is just listen to my problem.

That's all I want. So, we will accomplish what God wants us to do this year. To our prayer and commitment and all whatever else.

It's not I do it, you do it, we are going to do it. And pray that somehow this year will be a year of spiritual growth and love and mercy. And in the end, we'll say at the end of 2013, by the grace of God, we ran this race, not I. So when Jesus taught us to pray, he said, when you pray, this is how you should pray.

Our Heavenly Father. And the our means every kind of creatures in it, by the way. And we are not the same kind of people.

And we are all different. But we are His body. And I pray that somehow we'll be less critical, less condemning, less being harsh, but more merciful and encouraging.

And together we will march forward. And at the end, He will have accomplished His purposes. And I want to be a person like that.

And let us commit ourselves in a fresh way as we walk into this year. And I think it's going to be the best year of our life. By His grace.

And we can. And we must. And we will.

Let's pray. And dear Jesus, we want to thank you for the instruction that we have from your word. Asking us to focus on you.

Think about your mercy and your grace and your example. Then Lord, think about all these people that you approved. Your saints, they are right now with you.

And they are watching us. Hoping and wishing that we too will keep running and never give up. No matter how many failures and struggles and sins and shortcomings.

But then Lord, I pray that you will help us to become the reason for others to keep running the race. Loving and gracious and holding others hands and encouraging them. Lord, we pray that as a community somehow Lord, during this whole year we experience this reality that we will see a lot more people come to know you from all these nations that never had a chance to hear your name.

And it's all because what you said. If you love one another, they will know you are mine. Oh Lord, may our hearts be filled and Lord, it will overflow with grace and mercy and love and compassion.

And give us the unity that we will all walk together. Thank you for doing that, Lord. Even tonight I pray that you lead us in this time of prayer.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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