



Preserving to the End
Reverend Roy Caudill
Lenten Message
Glacial Lakes Superintendent

Hello! I am Roy Caudill, Glacial lakes District Superintendent. It is good to be with you again this year. As you know the Cabinet has been looking at Adam Hamilton's book "Revival-Faith as Wesley Lived It." When we sat at the cabinet table reviewing the book and assigning chapters for these videos I humorously said that since I was retiring this year I should present chapter 6, "Persevering to the End." The truth is our concept of retirement is really not a biblical concept in part because people simply did not live long enough to retire as we do today. Persevering to the end as Wesley lived it meant to the end of this life as we know it, and Wesley lived to the age of 87, well beyond the average life expectancy of his day.

So, what can we learn from John Wesley about persevering to the end through this life of faith?

1. Perseverance means tending to our life of faith. This life of faith is not easy. If it was everyone would do it. Wesley taught and demonstrated personal piety by attending to the ordinances of God, what Bishop Rueben Job called staying in love with God. I often ask pastors, "How are you doing in being formed spiritually?" The answer speaks to their spiritual practices and how it is with their soul. Wesley himself challenged listeners throughout England (and Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) to a deeper level of commitment and a serious pursuit of a holy life. Wesley said that many who thought they were Christians seemed to be so in name only; they were almost Christians. They did little or nothing to grow in love with God. There is more to being a Christian than simple acceptance. Wesley said there is a power, love, and joy that come from walking with God. And God expects more from Christians than simply trying not to be so bad as other people.
2. Perseverance means standing firm in the face of opposition. During nineteen years of sermons John Wesley was pelted with rotten tomatoes, manure, and stones, but he refused to give up. He often reported that those who came like lions to devour him often left like lambs, and many found their souls awakened by his preaching. Wesley refused to give up, and his perseverance in the face of opposition made all the difference.

Adam Hamilton tells of a time ten years ago when he felt like giving up. He had preached a sermon that led about 900 people to leave his church over a year's time. He received emails and notes expressing disappointment. One evening he said to his wife, "LaVon, I don't want to do this anymore. It's too hard." His wife replied, "Is God calling you to quit, or are you simply giving up?" Well, Adam Hamilton did not quit and the last ten years have been the best yet.

3. Perseverance means we give to what we proclaim. You will recall what Wesley said about money? Gain all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can. Do you know that Wesley came to the point in his later years where he lived on 10% of his income and gave away 90%? Wesley was teaching and modeling that holiness and a desire to serve God can be judged in part by looking at our finances. If Wesley were here today he would probably point out that giving money, while important, is not the primary aim of the Christian life; it is merely a reflection of our faith. The aim of the Christian life is being wholly devoted to God, and loving God and neighbor, which in turn leads to financial generosity.

Persevering to the end, John Wesley knew and said from his death bed at City Road Chapel in London, "The best of all is, God is with us." Full of hope at age 87 John Wesley breathed his last. John Wesley lived head, heart, and hands. It held together both the evangelical gospel, calling us to trust in Christ as savior and Lord, and the social gospel, calling us to be God's instruments of healing in a broken world.

So, today we are faced with some questions.

1. How are we doing in our spiritual development?
2. What are we doing to speak for the voiceless?
3. As we grow and serve in this spiritual life, is it making any difference in the way we give?

We are called to persevere to the end. Wesley did. Jesus did. So can we. But remember, the end is not really the end. Easter comes. Resurrection happens. Amen.

