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The past few years have been tumultuous to say the least. The old Chinese proverb seems particularly appropriate, “May you live in interesting times.” I recently came across the story of an early twentieth century explorer, Earnest Shackleton, his ship Endurance, and his crew. They give us an exceptional example of perseverance and overcoming hardship.

Shackleton and the crew of the Endurance were attempting to be the first group to cross Antarctica. The Endurance set sail on December 5th, 1914, from South Georgia Island. Their intended destination was Vahsel Bay in the Weddell Sea. They encountered unseasonably excessive amounts of pack ice, and the Endurance became ice bound. After nine months trapped in the ice, The Endurance succumbed to the constant pressure of the ice.

Shackleton ordered his 28 crew members to salvage what they could and to release the life boats. They set up camp on the ice floe and hoped that the ice drift would take them close to Paulet Island, where they knew that supplies were cached. They made several attempts to cross the ice floe by dragging the life boats and their supplies, but found the ice to be impassable. On March 17<sup>th</sup> they calculated that they were within 60 miles of Paulet Island. Several weeks later the ice floe broke in two. Shackleton ordered his men into their lifeboats and ordered them to row towards the nearest Island. After five days of constant rowing, in perhaps the most dangerous sea on Earth, the three life boats landed on Elephant Island.

Elephant Island was an inhospitable landing spot. Shackleton, concerned by the lack of resources on the island, decided to try a risky open boat journey to South Georgia Island. Shackleton rigged the sturdiest of the lifeboats with a mast and sail, and set out with five of his crew. Fifteen days later, the cliffs of South Georgia were in view; however, hurricane-force winds made it impossible to reach the island. The six men were forced to wait at sea in a life boat until the hurricane passed.

The following morning they finally made landfall on the uninhabited south shore of the island. Shackleton was afraid his boat was so severely damaged that they would not be able to sail to the other side of the island. After a brief rest, Shackleton and two other crewmen set out with only 50 feet of rope and a carpenter’s adze, to cross the treacherous landscape of South Georgia. They were the first men to make the 22-mile journey and did so in 36 hours.

Immediately upon his arrival at the whaling station, he sent a boat to pick up the three men on the other side of the island, and began a plan to rescue his remaining crew still on Elephant Island. His crew was rescued from the island on August 30th, 1916, 634 days after they first left South Georgia Island. All 28 crew members (including one unfortunate stowaway) were alive and in relatively good health.

Those same principles of persistence and determination apply to us today, just as they did to Earnest Shackleton and the crew of the Endurance. If we remain steadfast in our own lives, jobs, and families, we can overcome the trials of our time.

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