

Growing Up in Him

Today's Equipping Thought: Taken from "My Utmost for His Highest"

The Discipline of Spiritual Perseverance

"Be still, and know that I am God ..." (Psalm 46:10).

Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen. Perseverance means more than just hanging on, which may be only exposing our fear of letting go and falling. Perseverance is our supreme effort of refusing to believe that our hero is going to be conquered. Our greatest fear is not that we will be damned, but that somehow Jesus Christ will be defeated. Also, our fear is that the very things our Lord stood for—love, justice, forgiveness, and kindness among men—will not win out in the end and will represent an unattainable goal for us. Then there is the call to spiritual perseverance. A call not to hang on and do nothing, but to work deliberately, knowing with certainty that God will never be defeated.

If our hopes seem to be experiencing disappointment right now, it simply means that they are being purified. Every hope or dream of the human mind will be fulfilled if it is noble and of God. But one of the greatest stresses in life is the stress of waiting for God. He brings fulfillment, "because you have kept My command to persevere ..." (Revelation 3:10).

Continue to persevere spiritually.

Scripture:

II Peter 1:3-11 "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Introduction:

Christians are never allowed to remain static. There must be a continual growth. Daily we are becoming more like the person God has called us to be, if we give ourselves to the process. Growing up in Him (Jesus Christ) is a step by step process that we must never lose sight of. Everything that happens in our lives help to produce the transformation need in us to become like Christ. (Romans 8:28-30)

I. God has given His divine power to promote this growth.

A. We do not depend on our own strength, power or ability. We have a Father who speaks to us and directs our lives.

John 10:27-29 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."

1. We might fail when depending upon our own abilities.

2. We might fail if we continue to do things our own way instead of God's way.

B. He will supply all our needs.

Philippians 4:19 "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

1. Wherever we need for spiritual growth.

2. Whatever we need in regard to faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness brotherly kindness and love.

- C. God is faithful to finish everything that He begins.
1 Thessalonians 5: 23-24 *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”*
Philippians 1:6 *“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”*

In May 1855, an eighteen-year-old boy went to the deacons of a church in Boston. He had been raised in a Unitarian church, in almost total ignorance of the gospel, but when he had moved to Boston to make his fortune, he began to attend a Bible-preaching church. Then, in April of 1855, his Sunday school teacher had come into the store where he was working and simply and persuasively shared the gospel and urged the young man to trust in the Lord Jesus. He had, and now he was applying to join the church. One fact quickly became obvious. This young man was almost totally ignorant of biblical truth. One of the deacons asked him, "Son, what has Christ done for us all--for you--which entitles Him to our love?" His response was, "I don't know. I think Christ has done a great deal for us, but I don't think of anything in particular as I know of."

Hardly an impressive start. Years later his Sunday school teacher said of him: "I can truly say that I have seen few persons whose minds were spiritually darker than was his when he came into my Sunday school class. I think the committee of the church seldom met an applicant for membership who seemed more unlikely ever to become a Christian of clear and decided views of gospel truth, still less to fill any space of public or extended usefulness." Nothing happened very quickly to change their minds. The deacons decided to put him on a year-long instruction program to teach him basic Christian truths. Perhaps they wanted to work on some of his other rough spots as well. Not only was he ignorant of spiritual truths, he was only barely literate, and his spoken grammar was atrocious. The year-long probation did not help very much. At his second interview, there was only a minimal improvement in the quality of his answers, but since it was obvious that he was a sincere and committed (if ignorant) Christian, they accepted him as a church member.

Over the next years, I am sure that many people looked at that young man and, convinced that God would never use a person like that, they wrote off Dwight L. Moody. But God did not. By God's infinite grace and persevering love, D. L. Moody was transformed into one of the most effective servants of God in church history, a man whose impact is still with us.

Quoted from: Gary Inrig, "Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay"

- D. God has provided everything we need for the growth and transforming process.
- II. Our responsibility is to give ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- A. This involves choice. We make choices every day.
Joshua 24:15 *“And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”*
- B. This involves obedience.
Romans 6:16 *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”*
- The mother eagle teaches her little ones to fly by making their nest so uncomfortable that they are forced to leave it and commit themselves to the unknown world of air outside. And just so does our God to us. He stirs up our comfortable nests, and pushes us over the edge of them, and we are forced to use our wings to save ourselves from fatal falling. Read your trials in this light, and see if you cannot begin to get a glimpse of their meaning. Your wings are being developed.
-- Hannah Whitall Smith
- C. This involves diligence.
Galatians 6:9 *“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”*