

Attitude #9 . . . Perseverance

Jesus said: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:11-12

I stand firm in my faith that Jesus is in control of all things.

Perseverance - steady and continued action or belief, usually over a long period and especially despite difficulties or setbacks.

Insistence, urgency, firmness, resolve, determination.

We can learn a great deal about a man when we know what makes him quit. We know that some are more likely to quit than others because they are more familiar with quitting than others. Quitting can become as habitual as anything else; the easier it becomes for a person to give up the more likely they are to do so. On the other hand, we can learn a lot more about the man that will not give up. The fact that a person does not give up is not all that makes him an example to follow. Unfortunately, there have been things in many of our lives that we should have given up on long before we decided to do so.

Perseverance for the Christian is the steadfast effort to follow God's will and to do His work in the face of adversity and challenges. It does not mean that we will never be tempted to give up, nor does it mean that we will never give in to the things that we have struggled with in the past; we will not be perfect. However, it does mean, with the Lord's help, we can overcome the struggles of the past and live in victory in the present. This will be accomplished in part by our dependence upon the Lord and our knowledge and application of His word.

Perseverance will be the result of our Christian growth. Very few people persevere and move forward for God and with God if they are not also growing in their faith. Christian growth does not shelter me from adversity; it teaches me how to correctly respond to adversity. When I am not growing my response to adversity is more likely to be rooted in old thinking and old methods. When I am growing, I am more likely to respond to adversity because of new thinking and God's methods. When we are persevering because of our Christian growth we are, by faith, allowing the Lord to lead and guide us in the choices that we make along the way.

The New Testament makes it clear that faith alone can save. But it makes it equally clear that perseverance in doing good works is the greatest indication that an individual's faith is genuine (**James 2:14-26**).

As a result of perseverance, the Christian can expect not only to enhance the strength of the church, but also to build up the strength of his own character and become closer to the Lord.

Romans 5:3,4 - And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

In **1 Corinthians 15** the subject of the entire chapter is the resurrection. Paul establishes the certainty of the resurrection of Christ and from this truth he settles the question of those who say there is no resurrection. He writes of the change that will be made in the bodies of believers at the resurrection and tells of the change that will be made in those that will be living at the sound of the last trumpet. He sums up the argument with an encouragement to Christians to be resolved and diligent in the Lord's service because they know they will be rewarded for doing so. Without reading the entire chapter we see the subject matter in the following verses.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 - Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our text for the attitude of perseverance:

1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1. Paul's Sincerity. Therefore, my beloved (esteemed, dear) brethren (fellow believer)...

John 13:34,35 - A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

From Paul's heart to their heart, his sincerity was rooted in his genuine care and concern for their spiritual well being. There seems to be something about the love we experience from

other believers that is part of what holds us together. When Paul was encouraging these believers to be steadfast and unmovable we can sense by his description (**my beloved brethren**) his love for them. He felt the need to not only be their teacher but switch hats for a moment and become their motivator and encourager; one who would cheer them on to the finish. We all need that in our lives, and we all need to be that in the lives of others.

One thing that most of us would admit concerning our responsibility to love the brethren is that we might not be very good at carrying out that responsibility. Perhaps it is a result in our being "products of our past environments"; but God would never give us a responsibility and not expect us to gradually and consistently carry it out, especially since He will give us the strength, knowledge and ability to do so. If people are going to respond to anything they will respond to genuine love. Just because we are not good at it does not mean that we cannot become better at it.

1 John 4:19 - We love him, because he first loved us.

2. Paul's Endurance. Be ye stedfast (firm), unmoveable (firmly persistent)...

We know that Paul wrote this to the church in Corinth because he was speaking from experience. He was steadfast and he was unmovable. He was not teaching what he was not doing, and he was therefore able to motivate others to do the same. We might say that what Paul learned, he learned in part by experience.....he was a practitioner. He was not speaking to them concerning something that he ought to do; he was speaking to them concerning something that he was doing.

Acts 20:24 - But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul made the previous statement following his description of the struggle that he was about to experience when he would soon arrive in Jerusalem.....**"bonds and afflictions await me" (Vs. 23).**

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory (rejoice, whether with reason or without) in my infirmities, that the

power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

There is a great deal of hope knowing that what you are going through someone else has already been **through** it as well. When we need to be firm and persistent it helps to be around others who are doing the same thing and some who have done the same.

Proverbs 27:17 - Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

We are sharpened by those that we are around. Good behavior is sharpened by being around those who are good and unruly behavior is sharpened by being around those who are unruly.

3. Paul's priority. Always abounding in the work of the Lord...

Colossians 3:23 - And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

This is where many of us miss it. It would do us well to ask the question, "Why am I doing what I am doing?" Whether it be good or bad, I need to ask myself why I am doing what I am doing. To abound in the work of the Lord is to continue, to exceed or increase; it has the idea of growth and progress. When these things are not included in my life as a Christian then I will more than likely find other things to do.

Ask yourself, "Am I moving forward; and if I am, how has that changed what I do? More specifically, how has that changed what I do for the Lord?"

4. Paul's hope. Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain (empty, void of truth, things that contain nothing) in the Lord.

One of the main reasons that people give up is there does not appear to be any immediate gratification and/or reward for moving forward. One of the reasons for moving forward is that it gives us purpose. When we persevere, we will begin and continue to see answers for some of the things that we have been through. We will begin to see that much of what we have been through that we would never wish to go through again, can still now be used for God's glory. If we give up and give in to the old ways, we will sacrifice our opportunity to see and experience what God wanted to do for His glory and our good.