

PERSEVERANCE

Rev. J. C. Black

Perseverance is defined by Webster as being, "the act of persisting in anything undertaken". In modern phraseology it is sometimes called "stick-to-it-ve-ness". The word perseverance only occurs once in scripture; Eph. 6:18, but is implied in many other passages. To some it appears to be a natural quality, others have to acquire it. But whether by nature or by grace; whether natural or acquired, it is the gift of God, and a very essential qualification in every sphere of life. It has been said, "Well begun is half done", and it is true that a good beginning in any undertaking or enterprise gives great momentum to it, but is no guarantee that the undertaking will ever be completed or be a success. Because a person has had a wonderful conversion is no guarantee that he will always be true. Sometimes we have seen people who professed to get converted and we felt a little dubious, but they would persevere in the face of everything and often outstrip the one who apparently got a better start.

You have read or heard the fable of the hare and the tortoise running the race. The hare thought he could take a nap and easily win the race, but the tortoise plodded on and reached the winning post ere the hare was half way. The moral is that "slow and steady wins the race". We do not want to try to induce any to come down to the tortoise pace, nor to discourage any from going as fast as they can, but if you cannot go as fast as others keep going. Go on, go on! Better go slowly than not to go at all. The successful people are the ones who persevere. The secret of success with the apostle Paul was surely this, "Instant in season and out of season". "This one thing I do, I press forward". Surely Luther, Knox, Wesley, Bunyan and others whose names are immortal were men of this character. A little over one hundred years ago the prisons of Europe were in a most wretched, filthy and almost barbarous condition. John Howard at this time was living near Bedford, Eng., and being appointed to the office of sheriff which he declared, "brought the distress of the prisoners more immediately under his notice", he began to write and agitate in their behalf. The results were not forthcoming at once, but he continued to write and agitate, and, in due time "prison reform" was the outcome.

A young man of humble parentage stood one day and saw a young woman being sold by auction. As he listened to the auctioneer describing her good points and qualities he said: "By the help of God I will some day hit slavery such a blow as will send it back to the pit from whence it came." Some time after he was elected to the State of Illinois legislature and later to the Presidential chair. On the first of January, 1863, this same Abraham Lincoln with a stroke of the pen liberated four millions of slaves.

The late Lord Strathcona, fitly called the great empire builder, who began his commercial life in Canada in the employment of the Hudson Bay Co., took as his motto the word "Perseverance" and years after when knighted by the British Sovereign he had this same word as the inscription on his coat of arms. You remember the story of the minister, who went to see a sick parishioner, but was refused admittance for twenty-one successive days. On the twenty-second day he was admitted and allowed to talk and pray with the man. Brethren in the ministry, persevere. Sunday school teachers, persevere. Temperance workers, persevere. Fellow-pilgrims, persevere. "Forasmuch as ye know

that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." "For in due season we shall reap if we faint not."—Holiness Era.

"OUGHT"

(Commissioner S. L. Brengle

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint". Luke 18:1.

That little "ought" is emphatic. It implies obligation high as Heaven and deep as hell and is inescapable. Jesus said, "Men ought always to pray", and added, "and not to faint". Men "ought" to pray. They ought to pray "always" and they ought not to faint or grow faint-hearted and cease praying.

A thousand times that text has encouraged me to pray. I confess I do not always feel like praying. There are times when my feelings are numb, when I do not seem to have access to the heavenly Father in prayer, when I find it difficult to pray, and judging by my feelings, there is no one listening to my prayer and then, these words have stirred me to pray: I ought to pray—I ought always to pray and I should not grow faint in praying.

Really, prayer is more than saying words. It's the expression of earnest desire, but sometimes I have felt that my desires were not earnest and then I have searched myself and have realized that while emotionally my desires were not earnest, volitionally they were, down in the depths of my being, deeper probably than my emotions, I desired the things for which I was praying.

And then, I have been helped to pray with this assurance "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord". Paul tells us in Colossians 4:12, Epaphras "labored fervently always in prayer for his brethren, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Prayer, then, is a form of work. In my early years I worked and worked hard and often went to my work not feeling a bit like working, but I expected results from my work regardless of my feelings. The farmer plows his fields often when he doesn't feel like it, but he confidently expects a crop from his labors, and he realizes that he ought to plow his fields. Now, if prayer is a form of work and our labor is not in vain in the Lord, then we ought to pray regardless of our feelings. If we can pray fervently with warm emotions, all the better, but if we cannot, we should still pray and not grow faint-hearted. We prove our faith by doing this. A thousand times I have prayed when my feelings were low, but I have found God faithful to answer my prayer as He is faithful to give the farmer his crop. He has assured us as He assures the farmer that "In due season we shall reap if we faint not". Galatians 6:9. Especially, ought we to pray for the souls we are seeking and for a world-wide revival and we should not faint.

Only recently, when I knelt for morning prayers, I felt a sort of deadness in my soul, no fervor, no access in prayer and just then, the "accuser of the brethren" which accused them before our God day and night". Rev. 12:10 became very busy; he reminded me of things that had long since been under the Blood and shot fiery darts at me. I could only cry to God for help and then, the blessed Comforter reminded me that the blood had long since covered my sins and washed me clean from their guilt and pollution, and reminded me that I must not cast away my confidence, that my great High Priest was pleading my case and that I must come boldly to the Throne of Grace and this I did and the enemy routed. My emotions were liber-

ated, my spirit was free, and oh, what a blessed time of communion I had with my Lord, and I found prayer easy. If I had fainted instead of fighting the good fight of faith, the battle would have been lost, gloom would have settled upon me like a thick cloud and enshrouded my soul, and I could not have reaped because I had not sown; I could not have received wages because I had not labored fervently in prayer.

William Bramwell, an early Methodist preacher, whose ministry was mightily used in the saving and sanctifying of souls and who was mighty in prayer, said that he never went to secret prayer without reluctance, with feet that dragged, with a spirit that dropped, but as he labored in prayer, his spirit revived and he found it oftentimes difficult to cease praying and his feet become like hinds' feet.

Let us pray!

—Christian Witness.

WHOSOEVER

A. M. Hills

A physician in Portland says that one Sunday night he was leaning on his hand in his office, studying a very critical case; and that while he was in that attitude, just at the eventide, there was a knock at the door, and a fallen girl from a house of sin right under the shadow of a church near by, said, "Doctor, come, Nellie is worse." I hastened over to the side of the poor, dying girl, dying from sin; and she looked up into my face, and said, "Doctor, is there no help for me?" "No, Nellie." "O, doctor, do not leave me!! I want you to stay with me—" Just then the organ broke out, and they sang a sweet familiar hymn in the church near by, known to the girl in childhood. As the sound wafted through the open windows and to the dying girl's ear, she listened, the tears began to trickle down her cheeks, and she said: "Oh, would God that I were a little innocent girl again at my mother's knee! Doctor, pray for me." He said, "It seemed as if the weight of a thousand worlds came on me; and though I was not a Christian, I got down and told Jesus all about it, and begged Him to see the tears of penitence and have mercy on the sinning girl. A light came into her face, and the peace of God settled upon her countenance, and she expressed her hope. But pretty soon she became delirious, and I knew the end was near. She thought in her delirium, that she was back again at her mother's knee, saying her infant prayer, and she prayed:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take;
And this I ask for Jesus' sake.

"O Lord, bless papa and mamma and little Nellie. Amen!" I could almost hear the rustle of the angels' wings as they swept down into that room to carry the girl Home, and she passed away with a radiant look of a redeemed child upon her face.

"But, oh", said the doctor, "the prayer that brought peace to Nellie brought an unutterable burden to my soul; I went to my office, in all my morality and good standing, and got down on my knees and prayed to Nellie's Savior, and asked Him to be my Savior, too." And he said, "There is a light coming into my heart in answer to that prayer, that is the beginning of the eternal day of Heaven."

Beloved, it is true—"It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."