

The Gables – Perseverance

Opening Story:

Quotes from famous people regarding perseverance:

- **Henry Ford (Businessman and Philanthropist):** "Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger, even though sometimes it is hard to realize this. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and grieves which we endure help us in our marching onward."
- **Paul Harvey (Radio Personality):** "In times like these it is good to remember that there have always been times like these."
- **Thomas Edison (Inventor):**
 - ❖ "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."
 - ❖ "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."
 - ❖ "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."
- **Calvin Coolidge (U.S. President):** "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan Press On! has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."
- **Robert Collier (Author):** "Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out."
- **John D. Rockefeller (Businessman and Philanthropist):** I do not think that there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost everything, even nature.

Dialog:

Donna: Why are we talking about perseverance today?

Rick: A Christian man approached me earlier this week, saying he was struggling with bad language, and asked for prayer. As I was researching how to answer him, I concluded one of the keys to overcoming issues of the heart, mind and tongue is perseverance.

Donna: Why is perseverance important?

Rick: In my experience, there are many ways to achieve a goal, but only those who persevere reach them. We're all different, so we each, by definition, may have different ways of accomplishing the same goal. We can't always do things the same way other people do them; we have to find our own path, as laid out before us by God, and in doing so, not give up.

Donna: What does the Bible say about perseverance?

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Rick: The Bible talks a lot about suffering. Perseverance is the key to enduring suffering. I once heard a naval officer say the primary purpose of Navy Seal training is to teach you to never give up. We should think of our own lives as Navy Seal training; training orchestrated by God. We're being evaluated every day, just as recruits are in boot camp, and we all want to receive a good report card.

Donna: I'm sure many in this audience are struggling with health issues. What does the Bible say to them about suffering?

Rick:

- Someone has said that "growing old is not for the faint of heart." God doesn't want us to give up; he will see us through our trials if we trust in him. Romans 5:3-4 says, "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." God is striving to produce these qualities in each of us.
- Perseverance through suffering is evidence that you are a true believer. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 says, "... we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering."

God also uses suffering to mold us into the person he wants us to be.

- James 1:2-4 says "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."
- 2 Peter 1:5-7 says, "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love."
- God doesn't want us to stay baby Christians. He wants us all to grow into mature Christians with the qualities just described. We should be striving every day to be more and more like Jesus through reading his word daily, meditating on it, obeying it, and communing with him in prayer.

Donna: Jesus suffered more than all of us ever will. He set an example for us, didn't he?

Rick: Yes, he did. God, his heavenly court, and redeemed believers who have passed away, are all watching us. Don't you want them to be proud of you?

- Hebrews 12:1-3 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him

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who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Once again, God does not want us to grow weary and give up. I remember when I was running my first marathon. I was really struggling. I had a mile or two to go and my shins were killing me. It was painful to walk, let alone run. I recall someone coming alongside me, looking me in the eye and saying, “Come on. Let’s finish strong.” That helped me get to the finish line. Don’t you want to finish your life strong?

Donna: What else does the Bible say about perseverance?

Rick: Hebrews 9:27 says, “... It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment ...” (NKJV). We’ll all be judged by Jesus one day. Revelation 2 gives us a hint of what that judgement might be like, and why perseverance is so important:

- Revelation 2:1-3,7b: “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary ... To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”
- Eating from the Tree of Life enables us to live forever. Don’t you want to be victorious? Don’t you want to live forever? If so, you need to persevere.

Donna: God rewards us if we persevere?

Rick: Absolutely.

- Hebrew 10:35-37 says, “So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised ...”
- James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”
- The “crown of life” is the greatest reward there is - living with God in heaven for all eternity.

Donna: Are there other benefits of persevering?

Rick: When we persevere, we not only help ourselves, but we have the ability to help others.

- 1 Timothy 4:15-16 says, “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

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- God wants us to remain firmly committed to the teaching of the Bible and not divert from them for the remainder of our days.

Donna: So, by helping others, we demonstrate our love for them.

Rick: That is correct.

- 1 Corinthians 13:6-7 says, “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

Donna: What happens if someone lived the early years of their life as a Christian, but did not persevere later in life?

Rick: It depends.

- Ezekiel 18:26-27 says, "If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin, they will die for it; because of the sin they have committed they will die. But if a wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does what is just and right, they will save their life."
- The theologian John Calvin would argue that a person could not have been a Christian in the first place if they fail to persevere. He may be right, but putting that aside, if a person fails to persevere, and they are in fact a Christian, they would get into heaven, but may not receive a reward (1 Corinthians 3:14, context is Jesus judging our works). Why would anyone want to risk where they spend eternity (at worst), or sacrifice their reward (at best), by not persevering?
- If the person is definitely not a Christian, they will not get into heaven, and will be separated from God for all eternity, first in hell, and then in the Lake of Fire.
- Have you persevered in your faith? If not, you should get right with God today. I was at a funeral yesterday. You never know when your time on earth will be up. To become a Christian, put your faith in Christ, believe that he paid the penalty for your sin on the cross, and receive God’s gift of eternal life.