

The Evidence of Spiritual Life, Part 6 | Perseverance

I. The Necessity of Perseverance

- Romans 2:5-8; II Thessalonians 3:5; Romans 15:4-6
- The Greek idea behind the English word “perseverance” refers to *abiding under* something. It’s like the mythological creature, Atlas who bore the weight of the world on his shoulders.
- God doesn’t just want us to adopt *occasional* virtue or cultivate *isolated* good works . . . He wants us to continue in the things which we’ve learned and *grow* in them. In fact, a lack of perseverance is a sure sign of an unbeliever.
- True perseverance can only come as we actively pursue the things of God because only God can cause us to persevere in His will.
- Are you continuing in the things you’ve learned and growing in them? Are you more spiritually mature this year than you were last year?
- Are you hoping for the future reality of your Holy Spirit-empowered perseverance? Hope comes through faith in what is written in the Scriptures through the power of God and which results in the same mind among God’s people as they obey Him in all things.

II. The Hope of Perseverance

- Hebrews 10:36-39; Revelation 14:12-13; Romans 8:25; James 5:1
- John describes our future hope as eternal rest.
- But the blessing of perseverance is not merely a *future* reality.
- **Endurance results in our perfection.**
 - James 1:17; Matthew 5:48 — This sets an impossibly high standard for this concept because it describes perfect gifts as coming directly from God.
 - Christ is the standard, not our pastors, not our favorite Christian influencers, not our own conceptions about holiness . . . God alone is the standard of perfection, and He demands that we be maturing in it.
 - James 1:25 — This substantiates what we have learned before. If we want to mature in our virtue, we will find God’s enabling and instruction in His perfect Word.
 - James 3:2 — Here we see the idea of perfection being tied to our ability to submit our words and—by extension—our actions to God’s expectations. This is a beautiful picture of Spirit-control.
 - Matthew 9:21; Romans 12:2 — Here Jesus equates perfection to seeking God’s will instead of our own.
 - I Corinthians 2:6, 14:20 — Paul’s use of the word is helpful in rounding out this concept. His use of the word refers to our maturity.
 - Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 1:28, 4:12; Philippians 3:14-15 — These passages tell us that God gifted us pastors to equip us for the work of the ministry which is building up the body of Christ.
 - Hebrews 5:14 further describes the spiritually mature as being able to handle the meat of the Word. Earlier in the passage, the author of Hebrews contrasts this solid food of the Word with the milk of the Word, the elementary principles that they had already been taught. Spiritual maturity requires growth and change, learning new things, deeper things, more mature things.
 - This is an absolute must and an unavoidable reality of spiritual life. If you are not growing in Christ, you are not born again. If you are on a perpetual, unrelenting, unrepenting, downward slide, you are probably not a child of God.

- **Endurance results in our completion.** I Thessalonians 5:23-24; Acts 3:16
 - This Greek word is a synonym of the word we just considered. I don't believe this list necessarily itemizes three different results of endurance, but it instead highlights three facets of the same result.
 - The first word argued for the trajectory and the momentum of our spiritual maturity, and I believe this word which is only used twice in the Bible is going to focus on the future reality. If we are on the right trajectory, then by God's grace the future result will be our spiritual completion. And it's in that direction that we should be moving now.
- **Endurance results in our possession.** II Peter 1:3
 - We have everything we need to grow. We must not be foolish enough to ever think or believe that we don't have what we need in order to mature in our spiritual lives.
 - We have faith through God's grace, we've been given Christ's new life which comes with the ability to be morally excellent, we have all of the knowledge we need in the Bible, and we have all the empowerment we need in Spirit-control to persevere in our spiritual growth.

III. The Process of Perseverance

- Luke 8:15 — We need to be honest about the Bible. The "good heart" we're to have is a mind that is consumed with that which is beneficial to the will of God. That is the heart that will accept the knowledge of God.
- **Pursue Christlikeness** Colossians 1:9-12
 - We must first be filled with the knowledge of God's will, we must also understand it, and then live in wisdom—wisdom being defined as skillfully living what we know and understand. It's the fruit of true belief.
 - It's important to note that growing in faith, moral excellence, knowledge, and self-control always results in *more* knowledge which leads to *increased* faith, moral excellence, and self-control. That repeating pattern is the very nature of steadfastness.
 - Men and women of God must consistently *chase* after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, and gentleness in such a consistent way that they are known for their perseverance.
 - Practically speaking, spiritual growth is actually pretty simple and straightforward. It involves studying God's Word to know and understand the milk and the meat, and then it requires intentionally and premeditatedly putting into practice in your life through God's power the things which God commands.
- **Flee Sin**
 - Hebrews 12:1-3 — What are some of the encumbrances and sins in which you find yourself regularly entangled?
 - We sin more than we think we do. The sins we acknowledge have other sins tangled up with them. Each sin has deeper roots that are their own sins. And the deeper we investigate, the more we will see that we are guilty of sin we never thought. We are gluttons. We are adulterers. We are fools. We are often immoral, impure, sensual, hateful, angry, disputing, divisive, and envious.
 - But Jesus authored and perfects the faith of every believer.
 - So why do we not persevere as consistently as we should? The answer is simple, we're not looking to Jesus. We're not laying aside the sin that offends His excellence. We're not living in the faith that produces genuine self-control in submission to the knowledge of God from His Word.
 - When you are tempted to return to the sins that so easily entangle you, stop, pray, and meditate on the truth you've been learning from the Bible. Make a *conscious* decision to persevere in what you know is right.