**ENDURANCE (#5)**

***We Have Only To Persevere To Conquer***

Life is hard. In the darkest days of Britain’s hardships as they faced the onslaught of Hitler’s day and night bombardment of England, Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke to his alma mater at Harrow School on October 29, 1941. He told the young boys:

“Surely from this period of ten months this is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never - in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. We stood all alone a year ago, and to many countries it seemed that our account was closed, we were finished. … Very different is the mood today. Britain, other nations thought, had drawn a sponge across her slate. But instead our country stood in the gap. There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it, we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that **we have only to persevere to conquer**.”

Each of us has our own war to fight. Indeed, life is hard. But what are you going to do?

The suffering Job was so right when he described this hardness: *“​Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue”* (Job 14:1-2). What Jesus said to Martha He could easily say about us: *“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things”* (Mk. 10:41). I don’t have you to tell you what you already know, this earth is groaning under the burden of sin. Paul describes it perfectly:

*“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see,* ***we eagerly wait for it with perseverance****”* (Rom. 8:22-25).

This broken world, caused by sin, was not God’s initial creation. Adam and Eve saw a world as God meant it to be. “*Behold, it is very good*” was His pronouncement on Day 6 when the last creation was finished. Soon, while still in its infancy, sin broke things to pieces. Thorns and thistles and pain in childbirth began the process of earth’s groaning for “*new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Pet. 3:13).

Many of you who read this are feeling the strain of life squeezing you like a vise grip. You are feeling like you have been in a heavyweight fight for 15 rounds with Muhammed Ali. Emotionally, perhaps physically, and even possibly spiritually, you feel pounded to a pulp. You want to cry out, “God, I can’t take it anymore! Please make life easier!” You wish, like David, you could just say, “*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest*” (Psa. 55:6).

When we are weary and heavy-laden Jesus calls for us to “*Come unto Me… and I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28-30). Isn’t that exactly what Paul did in his “Life Is Hard” moments? He describes the Christian’s life this way: “*We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed*” (2 Cor. 4:8-9). He later added this thought:

*“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

I have to confess to you, that paragraph you just read has given me more comfort in this life than you can shake a stick at. It puts our life in perspective, allowing us to see the big picture from God’s viewpoint. Just as I often allowed my children to learn some of life’s lessons at the University of Hard Knocks, so God schools us by helping us see that life on earth is never meant to be heavenly. God wants us to feel the pain of our outward man perishing, but to also feel the joy of our inward man being renewed. Life is hard, but it is but a “*light affliction, which is but for a moment*.” I can live with anything “*for a moment*,” especially when I know that this earthly struggle is “*working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.”

This thought brings me back to our main thought: “*But if we hope for what we do not see,* ***we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.****”*

How clearly can you “see” heaven? Is it fuzzy? Is it like the bottom line on the optometrist eye chart when he tells you to read with one eye from 20 feet away the letters on the 12th line: **x y l z t v r**
Or is it like the **E** on the top line? Depending on our spiritual vision, we will either “see” heaven and then take what life throws at us by “*eagerly*” waiting for it “*with perseverance*;” or, we will grow weary and faint. We will either say, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me*” (Phil. 4:13); or, “*Oh what a weariness*” (Mal. 1:13) and return like the hog to wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:22). If I have heaven’s 20/20 foresight I will “*eagerly wait for it with perseverance*.”

Let me close by sharing with you my perspective of life at age 68. Trust me, this world looks so much different than it did at age 18, 28, or even 48. My mortality is very real to me, no longer just a “possibility” as it was 20, 40, or 50 years ago. Sometimes, when life gets hard, and the night gets long, I can hear the grim reaper scratching at my door with his sickle. While that used to terrify me, now I merely grin and start a private conversation with him. No, I don’t open the door to let him in, but I do quietly talk to him without fear, for Jesus has “*released us from the fear of death*” (Heb. 2:15).

Yes, dear brother or sister, life is hard. But as Mr. Churchill reminded his alma mater, “Never give in, never give in, never give in… we have only to persevere to conquer.”

Eagerly waiting... – Rick