

Perseverance

Romans 5:1-5 [New King James] *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces **perseverance**; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

Through faith, we have a dramatically different outlook on life.

Even in trials, we can rejoice because we know that suffering has a purpose.

Suffering in trials produces the spiritual valuable result of perseverance, character, hope and love.

These are major facets of spiritual growth.

Perseverance is an important spiritual fruit of our Christian trials.

1 A Willingness to endure trials

The Greek word for perseverance is *“hupōmōnē”* meaning **cheerful or hopeful endurance**.

It describes a person who will **not** be moved away from their purpose, no matter what trials or how much suffering they must endure, to succeed.

The root of this verb is *“hupomenō”* meaning to remain under trials if necessary, in following God’s way of life.

By enduring such trials, people honour the Creator God and learn the lessons that trials may teach.

A person may work to minimise or escape a trial **if** they can do so **without** disobeying their Creator God.

Perseverance is the first quality listed in **Romans 5:1-5** that the Creator God wants us to develop in our trials.

Are we developing perseverance?

To answer this question, we need to clearly understand what perseverance really is.

Godly perseverance consists of four elements.

2 Faith in trials –

Romans 5:1-5 tells us that suffering can produce spiritual fruit.

The context here indicates the importance of faith, it is mentioned in **verses 1 and 2**.

Millions of people in this world suffer, but their sufferings do not produce perseverance, character and hope because they do not have faith in the only true Creator God.

Our faith in the true Creator God puts suffering in a very different context.

James 1:2-4 [NIV] *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

When things are going well for us we do **not** need perseverance.

We need perseverance when we have trials, when our faith is being tested.

Faith is the foundation on which our perseverance is built.

We need faith in the true Creator God to endure a trial.

Then as we persevere to the end, we gradually become spiritually mature, for our faith has been tested and proven.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 [NIV] *“Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.”*

God’s people throughout the ages have been outstanding examples of perseverance in faith through the trials of persecution and martyrdom.

Polycarp was a shining example of this in the history of the true Christian Church.

Polycarp was trained by the apostle John and was a leader of the Church in Smyrna.

Polycarp was murdered because of his faith.

Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical history, preserves a letter from the Church at Smyrna, telling of Polycarp’s refusal to worship the Roman Caesar, his refusal to renounce Christianity and his execution.

For details of this event see *‘The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia’* by W.M. Ramsay, chapters 19 and 20;

Or *‘A New Eusebius, Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD337’* edited by J. Stevenson, revised by W.H.C. Frend 1987, pages 24-27.

3 Tenacity –

This second quality of perseverance is well illustrated in Jesus Christ’s parables about perseverance.

Luke 11:5-9 [New King James] *“And He said to them, ‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within and say, “Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you”? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.’”*

Persistence or boldness in prayer overcomes our insensitivity, **not** God’s. To practice persistence does more to change our hearts and minds than God’s. **It helps us understand and express the intensity of our need.**

Persistence in prayer also helps us to recognise God’s work.

Luke 18:1-8 [New King James] *“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’” Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’”*

To persist in prayer and **not** give up does **not** mean endless repetition or painfully long prayer sessions. **Always praying means keeping our requests constantly before the Creator God as we live for Him day by day, believing He will answer.**

When we live by faith, we are **not** to give up. **God may delay answering, but His delays always have good reasons.**

4 Stamina –

Hebrews 12:1 [NIV] *“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.”*

The race the Creator God has called us to run in life is not a sprint, we are in it for the long haul, a marathon.

After reading about the heroes of faith in chapter 11, all those who persevered and those who died, we should be encouraged by their examples to persevere ourselves in our trials.

Remember, every long journey, every long-distance race, is simply one step after another.

Noah was an outstanding example of stamina, for over 100 years in faith of God’s Word, he built the ark and warned the world, [Genesis 6:5-22].

What would have happened if Noah didn’t have the stamina to persevere for some 120 years?

There is no failure except in no longer trying.

There is no defeat except from within.

There is really no insurmountable barrier save our own inherent weakness of purpose.

5 Courage –

Perseverance requires courage.

The perseverance that the Creator God builds in us is not passive waiting, it is courageous perseverance that gets things done in life.

Even in our trials we are to be productive.

Luke 8:15 [NIV] *“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”*

Putting this another way, today’s mighty oak tree is yesterday’s little nut that held its ground.

Many people can show a flash of courage in a sudden emergency, but what takes even greater courage is persevering quietly, day by day, in continuous suffering and drudgery.

6 Source of perseverance –

Colossians 1:9-11 [NIV] *“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully”*

Endurance and patience come from the Creator God who gives us, when we ask, the strength and courage we need.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 [NIV] *“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.”*

God can direct our hearts and minds into Christ-like perseverance. It is a gift of God, His working in us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ in us, [Romans 8:9].

Read and study the endurance that Jesus Christ exemplified, think of His faith, tenacity, stamina and courage He displayed.

The Creator God wants this kind of perseverance in each of us.

Our part is to seek it diligently and exercise such perseverance.

We do not just wait passively for it.

We are to seek perseverance and take action with it.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 [NIV] *“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, **endurance** and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”*

Pursue endurance, fight the good fight, take hold of eternal life, nothing passive in this command, for all the Christians.

Take action and persevere.

Conclusion –

To fight and win we must be equipped with Jesus Christ's perseverance, through the active presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

The Creator God wants our perseverance to prompt other true Christians to also follow the example of Jesus Christ, as we have done.

The Creator God promises to do this, through the crucible of trials in our lives if we yield to Him.

Revelation 3:7-11 [New King James] *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens’’: ‘I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie, indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. **Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.**””*

Here is a promise we can claim as true Christians if we persevere until the last days of our lives or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, whichever is first.