

LESSON 8

*Perseverance**“[add] to self-control perseverance”*

The goal of the Christian is to be like Christ – to become “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4). Knowledge is an indispensable element in achieving this goal. We must know who we are seeking to imitate. The mechanism which converts knowledge into practical spiritual living is self-control. Knowledge is of no value when left unapplied. However, this application of knowledge through self-control is to be understood in light of the standard of Christ. He is our measure (cf. Ephesians 4:13). Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Christ’s earthly tenure was the longevity of His moral excellence. He did not simply exhibit virtue in one grand gesture at the end of His life despite an otherwise flawed existence. He constantly practiced self-control in submission to the will of God. In the call to be “*partakers of the divine nature*,” Peter instructs us to add “*perseverance*” to our self-control.

PERSEVERANCE (HYPOMONE) DEFINED

- “lit., ‘an abiding under’ (*hupo*, ‘under,’ *meno*, ‘to abide’)” (VINE)
- “cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy” (STRONG)
- “the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance” (BDAG)
- “(1) steadfastness, constancy, endurance; (1a) in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.” (THAYER)

“*Perseverance*” is only fully appreciated and understood when considered in the context of proactive faith. It is not a passive quality of the Christian. It is the continuation of activity in Christ – submission to His will – despite opposition of any kind. When one abides in Christ under the weight of adversity he is persevering. This is not a reluctant trait exhibited as a grudging obligation. “Like Jesus

himself, who for the joy set before him endured the cross (Heb. 12:2), we are enabled to see our apparent misfortunes in the calm light of eternity” (Green, Michael, *Tyndale New Testament*)

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Commentaries). It is a cheerful endurance which looks to the realization of hope beyond the adversity. “*Patience*” only considers a part of *hypomonē*. “*Perseverance*” gives the fuller sense.

PERSEVERANCE (HYPOMONE) IS A CALL TO SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE

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The Parable of the Sower revealed four conditions of the human heart in relation to the reception of God’s word. Part of that which manifests the quality of heart is the element of time. The wayside soil prevented the seed from ever germinating. It was immediately snatched away. The stony soil allowed the seed to sprout and produce fruit, but only for a little while. It then withered away. Similarly, the thorny soil saw

the production of fruit, but only for a while. Fruit was not brought to maturity. Jesus explained the good soil as representing those who “*bear fruit with patience (hypomonē)*” (Luke 8:15). Young’s Literal Translation translates the verse, “*bear fruit in continuance.*” This contrasts with the thorny soil, “*bear not to completion*” (Luke 8:14, YLT). “*Continuance*” in bearing fruit is Christ’s expectation for us. Not for a little while; not in spurts; but continually.

Even in secular contexts, value is seen in sustained excellence, and not isolated successes. Anyone can do good once, but it is those who continue to do good that impress us. The Christian has been raised to “*walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4), not to live mostly the same way as before save a few moments in time. In explaining the impartial nature of God, Paul explained that His reward – whether good or bad – would be in accordance with the deeds of each person (cf. Romans 2:6). In noting those who would receive the blessing of God in the end, he wrote, “*eternal life to those who by patient continuance (hypomonē) in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality*” (Romans 2:7). Therefore, those who do good and seek for glory, honor, and immortality only to cease before the end of the race will not receive eternal life. Among Paul’s companions in the gospel was a man named Demas. His greetings were included by Paul to the recipients of his epistles (cf. Colossians 4:14; Philemon 23-24). However, regardless of the amount of time he labored with Paul in the gospel, and the great feats for Christ in which he was involved, Paul sadly informed, “*Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica*” (2 Timothy 4:10). In the end, the appeal of the world reigned triumphant in his life. He did not persevere.

Jesus’ call to discipleship is telling – “*Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me’*” (Luke 9:23). “*Daily*” connotes continuance and perseverance in the text. He is calling us to sustained excellence.

PERSEVERANCE (HYPOMONE) IS EXCELLENCE SUSTAINED THROUGH TRIAL AND TRIBULATION

“If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10). Perseverance is important because God has promised the test of adversity. He is not content with people who will merely seek fellowship with Him in times of ease. Demas and others forsook Paul, in part, because of the pressure of persecution (cf. 2 Timothy 4:16-18). The test Paul was put through proved his faith; it shattered Demas’. Peter demonstrated what a great hope Christians have in Christ, but then explained the necessity of trials we go through to reach the object of hope (cf. 1 Peter 1:3-9). We are kept for that hope by the power of God through faith, and the trials test *“the genuineness of your faith”* (1 Peter 1:7). Perseverance is the ability to stay faithful, i.e. abide in the word of Christ, under the weight of trial and tribulation.

Perseverance is telling. Paul explained that *“tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope”* (Romans 5:3-4). The NASB translates what follows perseverance as *“proven character.”* When tribulation arises, it is an opportunity for the child of God to prove himself. To persevere is to do just that. This is true to such a degree that Paul said the perseverance in persecutions and tribulations is *“manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer”* (2 Thessalonians 1:5). Our holding up in faith under the advances of Satan through suffering will be proof that God saving us, though destroying the sinners, is a righteous action. Contrariwise, for God to save us despite our folding under pressure and returning to sin would show Him to be unrighteous in His judgment.

Perseverance is a key component in our confidence of salvation. The Spirit revealed that we are *“heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed** we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together”* (Romans 8:17). Our suffering, by God’s design, stresses the future aspect of our reward. We do not receive our reward in full while on this earth but must suffer for a little while. Paul explains, *“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”* (Romans 8:24-25). People with hope persevere, and people who persevere can be confident in hope.

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DEVELOPING PERSEVERANCE (HYPOMONE)

Paul concluded his explanation of the gospel plan of justification by faith in Christ with the eleventh chapter of Romans. The next chapter began a discussion of the proper response to the mercies of God, namely, to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to God according to His will (cf. Romans 12:1-2). Among several responsibilities Paul listed is a powerful trio – *“rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer”* (Romans 12:12). These three exhortations go hand in hand and will lead one to the development of perseverance.

1. **Rejoicing in hope:** Paul prayed thanks for the Thessalonians, *“remembering without ceasing your...patience [hypomonē] of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father”* (1 Thessalonians 1:3). The language shows that inhering in hope is perseverance. Those who have hope *“eagerly wait for it with perseverance”* (Romans 8:25). Hope is the motivation of perseverance. If there is not reward on the other side of tribulation, there is no incentive to persevere. The confident expectation (hope) of an eternal reward promised by God transcends all physical circumstances. Therefore, the Christian can *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice”* (Philippians 4:4). This rejoicing, then, is ultimately in hope. When we constantly recall with joy and look forward to our eternal reward, then perseverance will be our response to any trial.
2. **Patient in tribulation:** It may at first seem odd that to develop perseverance we must persevere, but that is the most fundamental tool at our disposal. Like self-control, the essence of perseverance is the inherent created quality of free-will. Perseverance is the protracted exercise of free-will in self-control. James said, *“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”* (James 1:4). To be mature in perseverance we must decide to persevere in trial which means we do not cut it short. This initial perseverance leads one to be suited to persevere again. But this also necessitates something to persevere under. After noting the hope in which the Christian rejoices, Paul wrote, *“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance”* (Romans 5:3). We rejoice in tribulation because it is the crucible in which our perseverance is forged.

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3. **Continuing steadfastly in prayer:** In a context of developing perseverance, James instructed, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him”* (James 1:5). God is the giver and source of all that is good. This includes perseverance. He is called *“the God of patience [hypomonē]”* (Romans 15:5). If we are to grow in grace in any way, perseverance included, we must continually pray to God to bless us with it and maintain the corresponding submission to His conditions to receive it. Paul expressed his confidence in God’s protection of the Thessalonians, and their resolve of faith. He then followed by writing, *“Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience [hypomonē] of Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 3:5). We must petition God to lead us to persevere like Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:21-25).

LESSON 8 QUESTIONS

1. How is “*perseverance*” connected to the preceding “*self-control*?”
2. Define “*perseverance*.” Is this an exercise devoid of joy? How does the idea of *hypomonē* reach beyond our simpler concept of patience?
3. What quality set the good soil apart from the rest in the parable of the sower?
4. According to Romans 2:6, who will God grant eternal life?
5. What role does adversity play in our walk of faith?
6. How should the Christian view trials and tribulations?
7. How is persevering through trials “*manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God*” (2 Thessalonians 1:5)?
8. How does “*rejoicing in hope*” (Romans 12:12) develop perseverance?
9. How does being “*patient in tribulation*” (Romans 12:12) develop perseverance?
10. How does “*continuing steadfastly in prayer*” (Romans 12:12) develop perseverance?

