



~ The Heart of Perseverance ~

“And you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.” – Revelation 2:3

When I think of perseverance, I always think of exercise. My personal workouts carry so many spiritual lessons for me. I tend to not push myself as hard as someone else would. When it starts getting tough and sweat is trickling down my back, my mind begins to battle between the urge to slow down the pace to make it more comfortable and staying the course so that I can achieve my goal.

It’s a tough battle of the mind between what I feel and what I know I need to do. But, somehow the beautiful result of what will happen when I hit my goal keeps me going and helps me to stick with my exercise. My endurance and strength begin to grow as I press on through each hump and I begin to realize what I set out to achieve. It’s a painful process, but very rewarding in the end.

Our walk with Jesus is the same way. The journey we are on with Him is full of struggles. There are times that I wish He would snap His fingers and magically take it all away and just give me a renewed heart and mind without the effort. But, that’s not the process that changes me and causes me to realize the depth of love and power of my Savior. As much as I’d like it easy-peasy, it’s the hard times that really teach me and cause me to rely on Christ’s strength instead of my own.

I love the practical example given to us by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:3-7. Speaking to young Timothy, Paul knew he would encounter many hardships that his young life had yet to experience. He wanted Timothy to know that although he would face suffering, he would be able to endure it and receive the prize on the other end.

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.” – 2 Timothy 2:3-7

Packed into this little quotation of scripture is a powerhouse of meaning! Using the example of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer, Paul revealed to Timothy, and to us, the secret to staying the course and achieving victory - discipline and sacrifice.

Soldiers have to give up all distractions in order to focus on the battle in front of them and make their commander proud to have them beside them in rank. The prospect of victory is what keeps them going despite the hardship. Athletes train very hard to discipline their bodies to produce its best. They do this in the hopes of winning. They also must obey the rules of the game if they are to qualify. They can't follow their own whims. And likewise, the farmer works very hard to beat the odds and produce a huge harvest that will sustain him through the season.

This is the lesson for us: Like soldiers, we have to give up worldly security and endure rigorous discipline in order to win the battle over self. It's an all or nothing deal. Like athletes, we must train hard and follow the rules God has given us so we aren't disqualified. Like farmers, we must work extremely hard and be patient when cooperating with God in His harvest field. It will not be easy.

In each of these areas we keep going despite suffering because of the thought of victory, the vision of winning, and the hope of harvest. In the end, we will see that our suffering is worthwhile when we achieve our goal of glorifying God, winning people to Christ, and one day living eternally with Him.

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