

## *Perseverance*

Christianity is difficult. Jesus assured us of this (Matt. 7:13-14). Will we be among the few who endure the difficulty? Or will we be among the many who take the easy way out? Why do people give up and turn back? Jesus said the cause of digression could be tribulation, persecution, the care of this world, or the cares of this world (Matt. 13:18-23).

We get tired. Christianity is labor (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:58). It might be compared to a mother caring for a sick infant. As the infant cries with agony all through the day and night, no end is in sight. Yet somehow, the mother endures and perseveres. Paul writes, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). The message is that we will get tired, but we must not quit! The effort of Christianity is worth our lifetime commitment.

We are persecuted. The scriptures promise, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:12). We will suffer unjustly, as if we were evil doers (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:3-12). Yet, as good soldiers of Christ, we must endure the hardships which accompany spiritual warfare against darkness. Jesus informed his twelve that the worse the world could do was to "kill the body", but they "cannot kill the soul." Our soul will be preserved by God if we confess Jesus before men. Therefore we must "fear not them which kill the body." (Matt. 10:28-33)

We are tempted. Unfairly Satan hits us where we are most vulnerable: in the flesh! Why do we have to have temptations? Temptations seem so bad, but God says temptations do not have to be bad to us (James 1:2-18). God says that overcoming temptations translates to a blessing, and conversely we can turn to his good gifts, rather than succumbing to evil. God wants us to prove we can bear his fruit among a world of darkness. Temptations are hard to overcome, yet God provides a way of escape (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 10:12-13).

We can get comfortable with this world. When asked whether one wants to go to Heaven or Hell, some might answer, "Neither". They want to stay on earth! The lure of this world is strong. It is filled with things which appeal to the flesh. But God tells us we are strangers and pilgrims, purposed for citizenship in Heaven (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:11; Phil 3:20). What a great creation earth is, yet it is corruptible and defiled! But God tells us to hope for something better, Heaven, where the inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 1:3-9). The cares and riches of this world are not worth losing Heaven.

Let us at Northeast persevere. Jesus finished His work so we can finish ours. Jesus is "set down at the right hand of the throne of God" Heb. 12:2-3). He wants us to look to Him, the Victor, and persevere.

*Carl Lungstrum*