

DO NOT GIVE UP

Romans 5:3 ... "...but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance."

To be honest, I do not always persevere as I should. Perseverance is a commitment to keep working on a problem even when faced with large obstacles and discouragement. In my work style, I almost always plan my projects carefully before I actually start working on them because I believe that more success is found when a project is carefully planned, than in working without a plan. So, after I have carefully planned a project, and then worked on the project, I sometimes give up too soon when my plans do not work as well as I wanted.

Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb, but he worked on it for two years and prototyped it nearly 3,000 times before it worked. I might have given up after only 10 prototypes failed. James Dyson invented an advanced vacuum cleaner, but it took him 15 years and more than 5,000 attempts before he got it right. The Wright brothers spent 6 years trying to invent the first powered airplane. Marie Curie labored for years to discover how to use x-rays to look inside the human body, and it took many years for Alexander Fleming to develop the first antibiotic.

Perseverance is also a spiritual concept, as shown in today's verse. Paul tells us that he welcomes trials and tribulations because they improve his perseverance. Paul uses sports analogies in his letters, which make up half of the New Testament and tells us that the Christian life is similar to an athletic competition. You cannot win a game if you do not train. The same is true of our spiritual lives. We cannot win if we do not train, and tribulations are the training exercises that make us winners.

Do not give up too soon. When you face a hardship that you did not create for yourself, know that God is using it to help you grow, to learn patience, and to become better. God can even use the problems you create for yourself to accomplish that goal, but it is always better to avoid mistakes that cause you grief and suffering. Just as cramps, twisted ankles, sweat, and exhaustion help an athlete improve his skill, your spiritual life will mature as you experience stress, tiredness, discouragement and small defeats.

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