

Perseverance

“Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.” - Walter Elliott, *The Spiritual Life* -

“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.” - Martin Luther King, Jr. -

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”
- Confucius -

August Birthdays

6 GiGi Zamarripa	19 Keith Lovelady	26 Al Pena
4 Noah Perales	25 Pat Limburg	31 Aubrey Pena
12 Debbie Hoffman		

(Note: if anyone is “missed” here, let Jim know)

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.
Sunday.....10:45 a.m.
Sunday.....6:00 p.m.
Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Preacher:
(Vacant)

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Called according to His purpose...

To Be or Not to Be

By Bob Prichard

Syndicated columnist Sydney J. Harris made the following keen observation: "Men may be divided almost any way we please, but I have found the most useful distinction to be made between those who devote their lives to conjugating the verb 'to be,' and those who spend their lives conjugating the verb 'to have.'"

It is a necessity of life, I suppose, that we must spend a certain amount of time conjugating the verb 'to have.' Could it be possible, however, that our focus becomes blurred when we forget that it is much more important who we are than what we have? The Master said, *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15). He followed those words with the story of the rich fool, who had no time for God. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (Luke 12:21).

There is, however, more to the observation of Mr. Harris, I believe. Conjugating the verb 'to be' is really our life work. We are certain things - parents, sons, daughters, Americans. We are most importantly Christians, children of God. But beyond what we are, there is something even more important. What we must remember is that we are all constantly in the process of becoming. We are becoming more faithful or less faithful, more Christ-like or less Christ-like, more godly or more ungodly. Life is not static, and neither are we. We are always becoming. We ask the child, What do you want to be when you grow up? The questions for us are always, What do we want to be? What are we becoming? and most importantly, Who are we becoming?

Paul told the Romans, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not*

conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). The reason we should not be conformed to the world is that God has something better in mind for us. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:28-29).

Hamlet began his soliloquy with the words, "To be or not to be, that is the question." He then mused about whether it was better to struggle on or just prepare for the time when we have shuffled off this mortal coil. The time will come when we will not be on this earth. How well we can live with ourselves now and later, depends on whether we devote more time to who we are and are becoming than on what we have.

Forgive Me For Keeping Your Bible

The train blew its whistle and wove its way along the winding rails of the hometown of a brother in Hungary. A communist customs agent came through checking all the baggage. The sack of Bibles sat at our brother's feet. By his side lay his own personal Bible with notes and sermon outlines. The customs agent looked at the sack first. He opened it and thumbed through the pages of the Bible and began to sail them out the window of the speeding train.

As if for spite, the agent looked down at the open, used (obviously personal) Bible of our brother, grabbed it, and sailed it out the window to parts unknown. For three years our brother bemoaned the fact that his good Bible with so many notes and sermons was no longer his constant companion. 'I believe Romans 8:28, but, Lord, how can this work out for good?' he wondered.

One day he received his personal Bible through the mail. A letter enclosed read, 'Dear Brother in Christ: Thank you, Thank you, for the use of your Bible. I found it by the railroad three years ago. I have kept it, read it, and studied it often. My family and I have written many Scriptures down on paper and many more in our hearts. We cannot thank you enough, for now maybe we can go to heaven ... But brother, please forgive me for keeping our Bible so long. I thought that if I did not read it now, I might never again find a Bible to read.

'Oh, Great God and Father of us all, forgive me for my doubting,' wept our Hungarian brother.

Would not it be wonderful if all could come to the Bible as if we found it for the first time? We could be simply 'Christians' with a deep desire to go to heaven, to be with the saints of all the ages. Pick up your New Testament and read it again for the first time. That is, read it as if you had never read it before. Follow what it says-not what some man says it says. Do what it commands-not what some other book requires (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28

Shaped for Glory

During the Great Depression a good man lost his job, exhausted his savings, and forfeited his home. His grief was multiplied by the sudden death of his precious wife. The only thing he had left was his faith, and it was weakening.

One day he was combing the neighborhood looking for work. He stopped to watch some men who were doing the stonework on a church building. One of those men was skillfully chiseling a triangular piece of rock. Not seeing a spot where it would fit, he asked, "Where are you going to put that?" The man pointed toward the top of the building and said, "See that little opening up there near the spire? That's where it goes. I'm shaping it down here so it will fit up there."

Tears filled this good man's eyes as he walked away. Shaping it down here so it will fit up there gave new meaning in his difficult situation.

Some who read this may be going through terrible, troublesome times. You may be experiencing some heart-breaking sorrow. Or perhaps you are enduring some painful physical illness. Or it may be something else - maybe even too excruciating to talk to anyone about. The blows of the hammer and chisel hurt.

But hold to your faith. Don't let your difficulties get you down. They are only temporary. Glory is coming. It's the harsh blows to the outward man that often bring the greatest strength to the inner man. Keep praying. Keep believing. The Master has to do some shaping of us down here so we will be fit up there.