

“THE SEVEN LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS”

“Keep On, Keeping On” **Scripture Reading – Hebrews, 10:32-39**

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, ‘He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him’.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

‘Jesus said, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me”.’
Matthew, 11:6, NIV

This series is based on the book ‘THE SEVEN LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS’.

Shortly after his seventieth birthday, Selwyn Hughes sat down to compile a list of the truths the Lord had taught him as he walked with Christ for more than half a century. This original list contained between forty to fifty issues which he felt could be passed on to the Christians of tomorrow. In asking himself what was absolutely essential to living an effective and successful Christian life, the writer whittled them down to an irreducible minimum of seven.

Selwyn Hughes decided to call these seven key concepts ‘LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS’. However, this is not a call to legalism but a call to engage with the spiritual laws God has built into his Kingdom, which in turn enable us to experience more of his power and his presence.

Let the Holy Spirit unfold for you the basic laws that govern all spiritual success...

“KEEP ON, KEEPING ON”

‘The third law for spiritual success is to ‘KEEP ON, KEEPING ON’. It is a law of the soul that those who keep on keeping on and never give up will find their souls fortified for the task. We need to be steadfast and persevere.’

Selwyn Hughes

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Books\The Seven Laws Of Spiritual Success\03 Keep On, Keeping On

1. PERSEVERANCE REVEALED

WHAT IS ‘PERSEVERANCE’?

Dictionary: *‘to continue in some effort, course or action, in spite of difficulty or opposition, being steadfast in purpose’.*

Thesaurus: *‘bear up, continue, fight, go on, keep at it, leave no stone unturned, stick with it’.*

WE FLOURISH THROUGH PERSEVERANCE

The soul will not flourish simply by going to church, singing a few hymns and thinking your Christian duty has been done. Permanent perseverance and persistence, in spite of all obstacles, are what distinguish the strong soul from the weak. It may be hard being a Christian in the place where you live and work, but God promises to keep us and uphold us in the most arduous of circumstances. Our task is to lay hold of God's strength and keep going no matter what lies ahead.

THE BIBLE HAS MUCH TO SAY ABOUT PERSEVERANCE

‘It is a regular theme of THE NEW TESTAMENT authors that the people of God must be steadfast. On the one hand we must resist the intellectual and moral pressure of our contemporary world and refuse to conform to the fashions of the day. We are not to allow ourselves to slip, slither and slide in the mud of relativity or be torn from our moorings and carried away by the flood. On the other hand, and positively, we are summoned to persevere in the truth we have received, to cling to it as a secure handhold in the storm, and to stand firm on this foundation.’

“THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN”, John Stott

‘On his voyage, which resulted in the discovery of America, Columbus refused to listen to the threats of his sailors. As day after day no land appeared, the sailors threatened mutiny and demanded that they turn back. Columbus would not listen and each day entered two words in the ship's log: ‘SAILED ON’.’

What happens if we ‘sail on’, or ‘KEEP ON, KEEPING ON’...?

2. PERSEVERANCE REALISED

PERSEVERANCE REVEALS GENUINE COMMITMENT

Consider the story of Nehemiah...

Despite persecution and opposition, the people managed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days. Through prayer, watchfulness and hard work, the people all had a task to do and were all involved in the work. Those who opposed them – namely Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod – were unsuccessful in their plot to fight against the city. The inhabitants persevered because they were fully committed to the work.

'So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.'

Nehemiah, 4:6, NIV

The work of rebuilding the wall progressed well because the people had set their hearts and minds on accomplishing the task. They did not lose faith or give up, but they persevered in the work. If God has called you to a task, determine to complete it, even if you face opposition or discouragement. The rewards will be well worth the effort.

PERSEVERANCE REVEALS GENUINE BELIEVERS

Consider how the world responds to Jesus – and his followers...

Because of the conflict between good and evil, between God and the devil, the world naturally hates Christ – and those who profess the Christian faith. How do you feel about that? Jesus himself said that men will hate us – because of him, but he who stands firm...

'Jesus said, "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved".'

Mark, 13:13, NIV

To believe in Jesus and 'STAND FIRM TO THE END' will take perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed. Severe trials will sift true Christians from fair-weather believers. Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us but marks us as people already saved. The assurance of our salvation will keep us strong in times of persecution.

PERSEVERANCE REVEALS GENUINE FAITH

Consider the Letter to the Hebrews...

The writer (Paul?) was specifically writing to Christians who were being persecuted because of their faith. He wanted to encourage them (and us) to hold on to the end.

'But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.'

Hebrews, 3:6, NIV

Because Christ lives in us as believers, we can remain courageous and hopeful to the end. We are not saved by being steadfast and firm in our faith, but our courage and hope do reveal that our faith is real. Without this enduring faithfulness, we could easily be blown away by the winds of temptation, false teaching, or persecution.

3. PERSEVERANCE REJECTED

Why do some people fail to be steadfast and persevere?

Why do some people defect? Why do we hear some people proclaim: "I GIVE UP... I HAVE HAD ENOUGH... FORGET IT... I CANNOT BE BOTHERED WITH IT ALL ANYMORE... I'M GOING HOME"?

There seems to be four reasons why people give up...

GIVING UP BECAUSE OF TRIALS

In his book, 'THE ROAD TRAVELLED', Scott Peck begins with the short sentence: 'LIFE IS DIFFICULT'. Coming to terms with this fact is essential and important. In fact, understanding this truth and accepting it means that half the battle is accomplished.

I am worried when someone says, 'COME TO CHRIST AND YOU WILL HAVE NO MORE PROBLEMS'. I much prefer the statement: "COME TO CHRIST AND YOU WILL HAVE SOMEONE TO HELP YOU FACE EVERY PROBLEM". After all, some problems seem to increase when we become Christians!

"Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward."

Job, 5:7, NIV

I would not want Christians to be spared trials, problems and suffering.

What would happen then? Simple! People would flock to the Church to take out the wonderful insurance policy that was on offer.

Undergoing trials and troubles should not surprise us, because Jesus warns us:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John, 16:33, NIV

Jesus told his disciples to 'TAKE HEART', to be of good courage.

In spite of the inevitable struggles they would face, they would not be alone. Jesus does not abandon us to our struggles either. If we remember that our ultimate victory has already been won, we claim the peace of Christ in the most troublesome times. As Christians, we should expect continuing tension with a world that is 'out of sync' with Christ, his Gospel, and his people. At the same time, we can expect our relationship with Christ to produce peace and comfort because we are 'in sync' with him.

GIVING UP BECAUSE OF DOUBTS

'Doubt is not the same as unbelief. Doubt is a state of mind in suspension between faith and unbelief so that it is neither of them wholly and it is only each partly.'

"DOUBT", Os Guinness

'DOUBT' comes from the Latin 'DUBITARE', which is rooted in a word meaning 'TWO'.

To believe is to be in one mind about accepting something as true; to disbelieve is to be in one mind about rejecting it. To doubt is to waver between the two – to believe and disbelieve and so to be in two minds.

Doubts are the common experience of most Christians.

We must accept the fact that doubts will come and not to think of them to be a sign that we do not have faith. They can be overcome – and they must be. Satan will take hold of doubt and turn it to unbelief unless we deal with it successfully.

Polish Proverb: *'To believe with certainty we must begin with doubting'.*

French Proverb: *'Those who know nothing doubt nothing'.*

HOW DO WE MOVE FROM DOUBT TO FAITH?

Mark, 10:29, NIV

Realise that doubts can weaken our trust in God.

They give us opportunity to consider who we are relying on (ourselves or God) – because we often doubt when we rely on our own strength.

Realise that doubts can often lead to temptation.

“IF YOU ARE”, said Satan to Jesus. Satan does the same with us – getting us to question who we are and who Christ is.

Realise that doubts remind us that our faith must grow.

Resisting doubt is possible when we practice trust. It is not enough to believe in the existence of God. We must believe in his loving care for us as individuals.

Resisting doubt is possible when we believe God's way is best. Too much we rely on feelings, the opinion of others, 'the stars', when we should rely solely on him.

Resisting doubt is possible when we pray and study God's Word. The Bible tells us that: 'FAITH COMES FROM HEARING THE MESSAGE, AND THE MESSAGE IS HEARD THROUGH THE WORD OF CHRIST'.

Resisting doubt is possible when we rest on the foundation of the Word of God.

Why are you doubting and fearing? Why are you still under sin?

Have you not found that his grace doth abound? He's mighty to save; let him in.

Jesus is strong to deliver! Mighty to save! Mighty to save!

Jesus is strong to deliver! Jesus is mighty to save!

Herbert Howard Booth, SASB 467:1



GIVING UP BECAUSE OF PERSECUTION

For the first Christians, persecution was horrific:

Some were flung to the lions whilst others were burned at the stake.

Some were covered with pitch, set alight, and became human torches to light the Roman Emperor Nero's garden.

Some had animal skin sewn onto their skin before hunting dogs were set loose.

Some were scraped by iron pincers.

Some had molten lead poured hissing upon them.

Some had hot brass plates affixed to the tenderest parts of their body.

Some had parts of their body cut off and roasted before their own eyes.

NONE OF THEM ARE PLEASANT TO THINK ABOUT,

BUT THIS WAS A REALISTIC END FOR THOSE WHO TOOK THEIR STAND WITH CHRIST!

Jesus warned his disciples to expect great blessings and much persecution.

“I tell you the truth”, Jesus said, “no-one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Jesus said to rejoice when we are persecuted.

Persecution can be good because: (i) It takes our eyes off earthly rewards; (ii) It strips away superficial belief; (iii) It strengthens the faith of those who endure; (iv) Our attitude through it serves as an example to others who follow.

We can be comforted to know that God's greatest prophets were persecuted.

The fact that we are being persecuted proves that we have been faithful; faithless people would be unnoticed. In the future God will reward the faithful by receiving them into his eternal kingdom where there is no more persecution.

Blessed are ye, O my people! Saith our God's inspiring voice;

When the sons of earth revile you, be exceeding glad – rejoice!

Great is your reward in Heaven, for the prophets' marks you bear;

They who suffer persecution shall the prophets' blessings share.

It is tough being a Christian in today's world.

Time was when people respected Christians even though behind their backs they might ridicule them. The modern view is that Christians are wimps or have a vacancy of mind.



GIVING UP BECAUSE OF SIN

How do you deal with yourself when you stumble and fall, when you are so engulfed in shame that you are ready to give up?

Do not try to minimise your own sin.

Many of our problems arise from the fact that we do not see sin in its proper light.

Do not call sin a mistake, a weakness or any other thing. A sin is a sin is a sin.

Do not try to excuse your own sin.

Do not fall into the trap of excusing yourself because everyone else sins.

Do not look at someone else and think yourself better or more spiritual because their sin is worse than yours.

Do not try to justify your own sin.

For example, although Joseph, when he forgave his brothers pointed to the over-ruling hand of God in his life, this did not make the brothers' actions in selling him into slavery correct. Such an act is still sin – even when God takes hold of our sins and makes them into something good.

Do go to God, tell him what you did, how sorry you are and ask his forgiveness.

Then how much more shall God our Father in love forgive, in love forgive!

‘But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.’

Philippians, 3:13b-14, NIV