



Final Perseverance by St. Bonaventure

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

It is not enough to be virtuous. To be firmly rooted in virtue, to possess virtuous habits, does not render us glorious in God's sight. Something else is still wanting. To be an object of glory to the eye of God we must possess the culminating virtue, the crown and consummation of all virtues, perseverance. No mortal being whatever, no matter how perfect He may seem, should be praised whilst he lives.

Let a man be praised not because he has begun a good work but because he has brought it to a good and happy completion. "Perseverance is the end, acme and crown of the virtues, it nurtures and fits one for merit, it leads to and culminates in reward." Hence St. Bernard says: "Take away perseverance and nothing remains. For the fulfilment of duty, the performance of good deeds and the exercise of fortitude will not procure the grace sufficient to obtain eternal praise."

It will avail a man little to have been a religious, to have been patient and humble, devout and chaste, to have loved God and to have exercised himself in all the virtues, if he continues not to the end. He must persevere to win the crown. In the race of the spiritual life all the virtues run, but only perseverance "receives the prize." It is not the beginner in virtue but "he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved (Matt. x, 22)." "What is the use of seeds sprouting if afterwards they wither and die?" asks St. Chrysostom. None whatever!

If then, dear spouse of Jesus Christ, your virtues are productive of good works, and I assume that this is so, be sure to continue in your good practices. Persevere in your virtuous habits. Make it a practice ever and constantly to increase in the performance of good works. Wage the war of Christ with all your might. Practice and increase in virtue up to the very moment of death. Then, when your last moment comes and your life is brought to a close, God will give you the crown of honor and glory as the prize and reward of your labor. Your best Beloved Lord Jesus Christ has assured you of this. These are His words, written for your instruction by the inspired writer of the Apocalypse: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life (Apoc. ii, 10)." What is this crown if not the reward of eternal life? The heart of every Christian ought to burn with the desire of winning this reward. In value there is nothing comparable to it, it is priceless. It surpasses the mathematician's power, says St. Gregory, to count its varying parts and manifold possibilities. There is no limit to its duration. It is to be enjoyed eternally. It can never cease.

Your Beloved Spouse Jesus Christ invites you to win this prize, to gain this crown. Listen to what He says to you in the Canticle of Canticles: "Come from Libanus, my Spouse, come my friend from Libanus, come and thou shalt be crowned (Cant iv, 8)." "Arise at once," you who call yourself "the friend" of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, the best beloved of the Eternal King, "come, make haste (Cant ii, 10)" to the marriage feast of the Son of God (Apoc. xix, 9). "Every thing is prepared (Matt. xxii, 4)," the whole court of Heaven awaits you.

Prayer for Final Perseverance

Eternal Father, I humbly adore and thank Thee for having created me, and for having redeemed me by means of Jesus Christ. I thank Thee for having made me a Christian by giving me the true faith, and by adopting me for Thy child in holy Baptism. I thank Thee for having given me time for repentance after my many sins, and for having, as I hope, pardoned all my offenses against Thee. O Infinite Goodness! I thank Thee also for having preserved me from falling again as often as I should have done if Thou hadst not held me up and saved me. But my enemies do not cease to fight against me, nor will they until death, that they may again have me for their slave. If Thou dost not keep and help me continually by Thine assistance, I shall be wretched enough to lose Thy grace anew. I therefore pray Thee, for the love of Jesus Christ, to grant me holy perseverance till death. Thy Son Jesus has promised that Thou wilt grant us whatever we ask for in His name. By the merits, then of Jesus Christ, I beg of Thee for myself, and for all those who are in Thy grace, the grace of never more being separated from Thy love, but that we may always love Thee in this life and in the next.

Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love; Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation.

(300 Days Indulgence)

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