

### **Excerpt from a sermon by Sabine-Baring Gould (1834-1924) "Perseverance" (2 Thessalonians 3:13)**

First, let me exhort you never to undertake anything, till you have well weighed it, and seen that you can finish it. Then, when you have taken it in hand, as a matter of principle, go through with it to the end. Some people are always beginning things and leaving them incomplete. They want the gift of perseverance. Or, they begin the thing well, tire of it, and finish it off roughly and carelessly. Make a resolution to carry out to the end whatever you begin, in quality equal to the beginning. "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

It is better to do a little well, than a great deal badly. It is better to begin a little matter and finish it, than to start a great one and leave it incomplete. If this be good advice in ordinary matters, it is still better advice in your spiritual concerns. In your religious life as in your worldly life, never attempt more than you feel sure you can go with.

If you undertake any good work, finish it. But do not undertake one till you have turned over in your mind your capabilities of carrying it out. Nothing is more common than for children to resolve to do this or that good thing, and to leave it undone, forget about it, or tire of it. Far better, I say, never to have made the resolution, than not to carry it through. I would not have you aim very high. Find out what you can hit, and try to strike the bull's-eye, but do not make shots at the moon.

Many a man has failed in his Christian course, because he has been too ambitious at first. When running for a race you are warned to run quietly at first, and to quicken speed at the end, and go to the goal with a rush. If you put your full strength at starting, you soon get out of breath, lag, and probably come in last. I have known a good many precociously pious children, and they have grown languid in their religious profession when youth came on, and have ended in complete indifference and an ungodly life. A river always has a small head, and widens as it goes on. A tree begins as a small plant, and increases its bulk and height as it grows. The day begins with a little streak of white, that widens and brightens till the sun arises. So it is in the Christian life. The beginnings are small, the results are great. A river does not stop flowing, nor a tree arrest its growth, nor the day halt its dawning; so the true Christian life is one of gradual progress. And it is one of progress, because the Christian soul is endowed with the grace of perseverance. Without perseverance it gives up increasing, it ceases from the struggle that attends growth, and comes to naught.

The grace of perseverance is then a very precious one. It is the continuance of life in your soul. I have seen little chickens that have died in their shells, without hatching out. They did not peck vigorously enough, or resolutely enough, at the thin white wall that shut them from the sun and air. They gave it up as hopeless, the breaking through of the shell, in which they could see no rift, and so they died. There is many a good intention, children, that dies like an unhatched chick. All that is wanted to perfect it, is perseverance, a determination to go on in spite of obstacles, to work on in spite of restraint. Perseverance is good, and obstacles will give way, and obstruction crack and fall before you, and good resolves will end in living works.

Perseverance is a grace, that is, it is a gift of God. As such you must pray for it, pray that you may persevere unto the end, for it is only to such that the crown of life is promised (Revelation 3:10): pray that He who has begun the good work in you may finish it (Philippians 2:6). It is only he that endures to the end shall be saved (Matthew 10:22); only he who fights the good fight of faith, and having done all he can, stands on his ground, not driven from it, who will be rewarded as a victor.

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He bowed head, and said, "It is finished!" What was finished? Why, the purpose for which He had come into the world, the Redemption of mankind. He went through with it at the cost of bitter agony, shame, and death; at the cost of the scourge, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear. "The work which My Father hath given Me shall I not do it?" Take that text as your maxim through life. You have a work set you by your heavenly Father, the work of spreading His glory and making you immortal souls to grow. Pray God to give you His best gift of perseverance, that you may, all through life, continue doing the work of God, both without and within, till death comes: and then your perseverance in well-doing will be rewarded with Eternal Life.

**HYMN: "Onward, Christian Soldiers" (Sabine Baring-Gould, 1865)**

1. Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before.  
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle see His banners go!

*Refrain:*

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before.

2. At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee;  
On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory!  
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise;  
Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise.
3. Like a mighty army moves the church of God;  
Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.  
We are not divided, all one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.
4. Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,  
But the church of Jesus constant will remain.  
Gates of hell can never 'gainst that church prevail;  
We have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail.
5. Onward then, ye people, join our happy throng,  
Blend with ours your voices in the triumph song.  
Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King,  
This through countless ages men and angels sing.