

PERSEVERANCE

I looked up the definition for the word 'perseverance' and it read..

"To persist in or remain constant to a purpose, an idea or a task in the face of an obstacle or discouragement."

How many of us have gone through this? Whether it is a job loss or an interview, loss of a loved one, a relationship that is breaking down, raising your children, illness and the list goes on and on.

How can we persevere in the Christian life? Well times like these are when we need God the most. You might say, "Oh, I

can't pray right now I'm too distressed." Well that's the time we need to pray even more. We need good Christian friends That can truly support us in prayer and encouragement during trying times and 'yes' even when things are going along smoothly to make sure we have accountability.

Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen. The main thing is we keep God in front as our guide.

We need to feed on spiritual food to grow, develop and function as Christians. We need to persevere in the life of grace. We need a continuance of spiritual food as a regular diet of God's grace. We need to have it our daily life to survive life's ups and downs.

It was the end of the summer in 2016 on August 23rd that Jerry, my husband, was taken by ambulance from work to RI Hospital with stroke like symptoms. They determined that he had a few TIA's. After running tests it was suggested that he go for carotid artery surgery since he had about a 70% + blockage.

He was scheduled to go in August 30th 2016 the day before our 48th wedding anniversary. He would have to stay overnight and could go home the next day with approximately 2-3 weeks recovery time. It sounded good. This would stop further strokes. He said "yes" to the surgery.

We decided to celebrate our anniversary a little earlier and we went out for a nice meal that weekend. Little did we know that our lives would change drastically - in just one day.

Going home the next day after the surgery never happened.

Jerry suffered two severe strokes..one during the surgery and one in recovery. He was in the hospital for about 2-3 weeks. One week of it he was in ICU. Then approximately September 15th he went to St. Antoine's for rehab and did not get discharged until January 2017.

In a personal relationship with Jesus Christ we strengthen the life of God in us.

I read in a daily devotional this... Satan wants you to feel so bad about yourself that you'll have no confidence at all. But the fact is you don't need confidence in yourself – you need confidence in the God who lives within you!

What happened in between was what kept us persevering. By sight it looked like Jerry would never walk again but by God's vision and leaning on Him Jerry was able to walk again. It started out small with a full leg brace and having two Physical Therapists assist him and two CNA's. It was a slow process but with all the prayers that were flooding in for Jerry and all the cards, texts, visits and telephone calls...Jerry was able to persevere through it all. It was all your prayers that got him through.

Marty and Irene gave Jerry a sign that we put over his bed at St. Antoine's that read....*With God all things are possible.* It is still over his bed at home today. Both of us held tight to that saying. When you have obstacles before you...not walking....not eating....not being able to sit up....not

speaking well... You must persevere and place God in the midst of all that you are going through to get you through.

Today Jerry is able to walk, eat, sit-up, hold a conversation and just drive me crazy.

He still has more to accomplish but he can be persistent and remain constant to a purpose and overcome other obstacles.

Do we feel like giving up? Yes, some days we do but we try to encourage one another and move on.

As Chris read this morning from PhilippiansRejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!.... How do you rejoice when everything around you is falling apart? Even though it's not going the way you want it to go Rejoice in the Lord that He has provided a roof over your head.. a

wonderful supportive family both our immediate family - our son, Ken who was there all the way and our daughter-in-law Meagan who are here today - and our church family and very supportive friends.

Most importantly do not stop praying for God's guidance and healing.... In vs. 6 it reads "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

When you feel discouraged turn to God and rest in His peace by praying and asking for help in whatever situation that you are in. Some people wait too long to bring their needs to God in prayer. It should be the first thing that we do.

Many a night I cried myself to sleep but got up the next morning and went on.

In vs. 13.... "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" This is one of my favorite bible verses.

Last week was Children's Sunday and the teachers and nursery room people were given a gift as a token of "thanks"

I opened my gift when I got home and there was a magnet that read..."I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Coincidence? I think not.. this is what I call a "God moment".

I believe that God gave Jerry and myself the strength to go on and achieve the many goals that were placed before us.

He put excellent Physical and Occupational Therapists, CNA's and Doctors in Jerry's path.

When you think God does not care about you through your very trying times and He has just abandoned you... reflect on this poem.... It's called....

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

One night I had a dream. I was walking along the beach with the Lord, and across the skies flashed scenes from my life. In each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One was mine, and one was the Lord's. When the last scene of my life appeared before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand, and, to my surprise I noticed that many times along the path of my life there was only one set of footprints. And I noticed that it was at the lowest and saddest times in my life. I asked the Lord about it; "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way, But, I noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of

footprints. I don't understand why you left my side when I needed you the most?"

The Lord said: "My precious child, I never left you during your time of trial. Where you see only one set of footprints, I was carrying you."

In the gospel lesson from John, God is telling us that apart from Him we cannot survive in this crazy mixed-up world. We are the branches and if we are not connected to the vine (Jesus) we will not be nourished and will not be able to accomplish our goals. We have to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Call on Him daily. He is our very best friend and He will be waiting for you.

During our trials, sufferings and loss .. God will never leave us or forsake us. He is our rock. He is right there with us.

We need to keep on keeping on Persevere.

May the God of all bless you.