284 Perseverance (*Perseuerancia*)

In virtues and good works perseverance is required entirely. For the worker (does not deserve) the wages of glory because he did not continue his service, Psal. [36:34]: “Expect the Lord and keep his way: and he will exalt thee to inherit the land.” Where Bernard in *Epistola ad Januenses*,[[1]](#endnote-1) take away perseverance, neither does service have a reward, nor beneficence grace, nor fortitude praise. Finally, it is not he who began, but who persevered, here will be salvation, namely who persevered in the good. Wherefore a certain metrical version,[[2]](#endnote-2) The end crowns, not the fight.

Again,[[3]](#endnote-3) describe the day from the end, not from the rise of the sun. And it should be given to the evening, if praise is to be given to the day.

¶ So neither to the one fighting bravely in the fight should the praise be given, or the reward if he should fall, Eccli. 34[:28]: “When one builds up,” namely making the works of repentance, “and another pulls down,” that is, falling back to sin, what utility is in each.

¶ Again, one who is baptized from death, that is, to be flooded from sin by the water of contrition, and again touches death by giving way to sin, just as a dog return to its vomit, what good does its washing, 1 Cor. 9[:24]: “Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one,” that is, persevering up to the end, “receives the prize?” Apo. 2[:10]: “Be faithful,” that is, persevering, “until death: and I will give you the crown of life.” John 7[:27]: “Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endures unto life everlasting.” Wherefore Gregory in *Moralia*,[[4]](#endnote-4) fruitlessly a good is begun, if before the end of life, it is abandoned, Matt. 10[:22]: “He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.” What with Chrysostom commenting, *Super Mattheum*,[[5]](#endnote-5) says, it is to begin a multitude of things, and finish a few. In the beginning is delight, in the end is the proof. No one can persevere, unless he who is of God, everything that happens because of the flesh, it is temporal which is for this temporal flesh.

¶ What however happens because of God, is eternal, and just like God is eternal. What else is begun in the good, is very often the will of the body. What however he finishes, the virtue is of the soul.

¶ For often the concupiscence of the flesh begins the good, but he does not finish unless by the grace of God. When therefore he has turned toward God he begins to do good works, he is not mindful of his acts, but he recalls the end. Because the memory of past good works toward neglect or boasting, the consideration of the end leads to fear. This is Chrysostom. Augustine, *Super Psalmos*,[[6]](#endnote-6) and in the book *83 Questionum*,[[7]](#endnote-7) says that the end is double. One which is of consumption, just as the end of food when it is consumed. And the other is consumption, as a tunic when it is woven. Perseverance requires of itself that it not be consumed, Psal. [118: 96]: “I have seen an end to all persecution: your commandment is exceeding broad.” Because charity is the end of perseverance which is not consumed but is consummated in heaven. Wherefore the Apostle, [2] Tim. 4[:7]: “I have finished my course,” etc., up to “a crown of justice.” Wherefore Jerome, *Epistola* 62, which is *Apud Vitalem*,[[8]](#endnote-8) not to have begun, but to have persisted is of virtue. Wherefore Christ, Luke 14[:28-30] says, “Which of you having a mind to build a tower,” etc., up to “was not able to finish.”

¶ For who wants to build a tower against the devil, first he ought to acquire the cost of virtues, and after continuing to build until he has accomplished it. For if he has not accomplished he will have those mockers who have instigators in fault. Wherefore in praise of Solomon it said in 3 Kings 6[:9] that “he built the house and finished it.” According to the craftsmen in finishing a vaulted roof there is the greatest peril of the work. Because the stone is placed which holds the whole work. So, in the end of life is the greatest peril for man, because if the corner stone is not Christ who makes both one, if he is well placed in the end of the work he crowns our building. Therefore, Paul said Act. 20[:24]: “I fear none of these things, so that I may consummate my course.” But truly few can consummate perfectly in this life, because this would be for the whole of our past life to satisfy fully. But we can discharge penitential works, as if ours proportionally. But only the martyrs pay for everything whether however it is ours. Christ says that of Luke 11[:8]: “Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet, because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him.” Wherefore Bernard, *Epistola* 120,[[9]](#endnote-9) you gather into a sum, how much that seducer of many forms up to now has played you, who when in you he was not able to impede the beginning of the good. For he judges this to be enough for himself, if he can carry this away for you, which he knew only virtue to be crowned. Paul the apostle is commended by a good end, not by a bad beginning. On the other hand, Judas began well, but finished badly, Matt. 26[:47]. Wherefore it is written, Eccli. [2:16]: “Woe to them that have lost patience,” that is, who have not consummated the good work.

¶ The examples for this are for fruits are better than flowers, tithes than first fruits, and the end of the prayer is judged better than the beginning.

1. Bernard, *Epistola* 129.2 (PL 182:284): Tolle perseverantiam, nec obsequium mercedem habet, nec beneficium gratiam, nec laudem fortitudo. Denique non qui coeperit, sed qui perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit (Matth. X, 22.). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Alanus de Insulis, *Opuisculum de Sex Alis Cherubim* Ala quinta (PL 210:280): Hanc perficit virtus perseverantiae. Finis, non pugna coronat. Qui perseverat, cessare nescit.  
    [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. *Deutsche Sprichwörterkunde,* by Friedrich Seiler (Bremen: Dogma, 2012, 1:78): Man soll den Tag night vor tem Abend loben: Quae debetur ei, laus vespere dandad diei. Vespere detur ei, si laus est danda diei. Vespere laudetur, si pulcra dies perhibetur.

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4. Gregory, *Moralia* 1.37.55 (PL 75:554): Incassum quippe bonum agitur (De poenit., dist. 3, can. 17, incassum), si ante terminum vitae deseratur; [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* homilia 24 ex cap.10.22 (PG 56:760): Quia incipere multorum est, finire vero paucorum. Semper in principio dilectio est, in fine probatio. Nemo enim circa Deum usque ad finem potest perseuerare, nisi qui propter Deum tandummodo factus est Dei. Omne enim quod propter carnem fit, corporale est, quemadmodum et caro ipsa temporalis est. qujod autem propter Deum fit, aeternum est, sicut et Deus aeternus est. Cor bonae fidei est exitus bonus: quia non incipere aliquod bonum gloriosum est, sed finire. Nam quod incipit, corporis voluptas est frequenter: quod autem finit, virtus est animae. Nam frequenter concupiscentia carnalis incipit bonum, sed non finit, nisi gratia Dei. Cum ergo conversus fueris ad Deum et coeperis Deo servire, et opera justitiae facere, ne aliquando acta tua recorderis, sed finem tuum cogita: quia praeteritorum bonorum consideratio jactantiam operatur, consideratio autem finis timorem. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 58.2.5 (PL 36:709): Quae sunt consummationes? Perfectiones: consummari enim, perfici est. Aliud est consummari, aliud consumi. Consummatur enim quod sic finitur ut perficiatur: consumitur quod sic finitur ut non sit. Superbia non permittebat hominem perfici; nihil sic impedit perfectionem. Intendat quippe Charitas Vestra paululum ad id quod dico; et videte malum nimis molestum, nimis cavendum. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* 69.7 (PL 40:77): Ipse scilicet finis est, ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus. Aliter enim dicitur finis qui pertinet ad consummationem, aliter qui pertinet ad consumptionem. Aliter enim finitur [H]tunica texendo, aliter cibus comedendo. Deus autem omnia in omnibus dicitur, ut nemo eorum qui ei cohaerent, amet adversus eum suam propriam voluntatem, manifestumque sit omnibus quod idem Apostolus alio loco dicit, Quid autem habes quod non accepisti (I Cor. IV, 7)? [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Jerome, *Epistola Ad Vitalem* 72.5 (PL 22:676): Non enim coepisse, sed permansisse virtutis est. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Bernard, *Epistola* 5.2 (PL 182:92): hanc colligas summam, quantum tibi videlicet usque modo milleformis ille seductor illusit, qui cum in te boni initium non valuit praepedire, invidit perseverantiae: [Col.0092C] hoc nimirum suae posse sufficere malitiae judicans, si hanc posset auferre tibi, quam solam virtutum noverat coronari. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)