

Column

I am thinking of a rather remarkable riding lawnmower. It belonged to a family I knew growing up. What made it remarkable was its resilience. One day it would be disabled, a pile of parts behind the house, the next it would be back in service, and this went on for years.

The one who made this happen was a man by the name of WT who worked for the family. I remember one day in particular when the parts lay in the condition I have just described them, the smaller ones being in a white plastic bucket. On my next visit, the bucket was still full of parts, but the mower was back in service. Later I asked WT about those parts. To which replied, "They ain't needed. Mower works fine without them."

If you could describe a piece of mechanical equipment as resilient, this lawn mower was. It just didn't give up.

Some people are that way. In fact, if you think about it, few qualities in a person's character are as important as resilience. By resilience I mean when the challenges of life or failures committed wittingly or unwittingly knock him down, he gets up and carries on. Resilience, moreover, is a lifelong endeavor. To make the run successful, you must attempt and attempt again.

As a small boy, I was fascinated by a certain fire tower. The steps leading up to the observation deck were open. On more than one occasion I started up those steps but got scared after going up a few flights and came down. I did not give up but kept trying. Eventually I made it to the top.

What's true with the challenges of life is also true when we do wrong things. Actually, there are two ways to go when we fall down. We can either stay down and wallow in the 'slough of despond', let it defeat us, or we can get up and keep moving.

Two New Testament characters illustrate these two options. First there was Judas who betrayed Jesus. He had remorse at some level for what he had done but in the end went out and hanged himself. He let failure defeat him.

The other character is Peter, that bold, plain-spoken and eager disciple of the Lord. After making loud protestations that he would never let Jesus down . . . “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” . . . following Jesus’ arrest in the garden, he denied that he even knew Jesus, not once, but three times.

One can only imagine how Peter felt when Jesus was carried out of the judgment hall and their eyes met. After that, Peter could have done as Judas did, let this grave error defeat him, but he did not. After Jesus was raised, He came back to the Master, got a new commission and went on to become the chief cornerstone of the Christian Church.

I think it is fair to say Peter exemplifies Paul’s words in Galatians 6:9: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

So may it be with us. Challenges and failures shall not defeat us, rather resilience shall be our watchword. As WT’s lawnmower kept on the job after many breakdowns, so may it be with us, God helping.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

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