

## **“Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night...”**

by rodge wilson

The title of this month's article comes from a poem by Dylan Thomas. It is a verse of resolve; a message of persistence, perseverance, and determination. The common refrain throughout is “Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.” Many times throughout our life, it would be easier to just stop. To give up and explain why it's not possible to go on and proceed through the obstacles before us. But that is not what we are called to do.

I had the honor of being asked to deliver the opening address at this month's Western Reserve Middle School/High School Merit Roll and Honor Roll Breakfast. There were 256 students invited to attend this prestigious event. And as I looked across the throng of students, I realized the grades themselves were not what we were celebrating. What we were celebrating were the sacrifices they had made to get here.

The faces I saw were of people to whom grades were just a small part of their life. I saw ball players who spend most of their free time practicing and executing their skills in competition for the school. I saw wrestlers who give up every weekend to pit themselves against their opponents. I saw musicians and thespians who put in countless hours to entertain us at multiple performances. I saw faces of kids who work at restaurants and stores across the county. And I saw students who tirelessly donate their time to community service projects and to helping those less fortunate. No, we are not asked to just get by. We are asked to put our personal desires aside for the sake of excellence; to rage, rage against those thoughts that would tell us to surrender to mediocrity.

And the kids I saw sitting there learned it from you. They have watched their parents and neighbors endure and persist. As our economy struggles, so do you. Many of you are working longer hours as employers try to do more with less. Many of you have picked up side jobs as unemployment benefits dwindle. Many of you are sacrificing; making due with less as positions are reduced or eliminated.

The children are watching, and they are learning. President Calvin Coolidge once said, “Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence.” He explained that talent, education, and even genius will often fail. Only perseverance and determination will solve the problems of the human race. And that is what we must teach our children. Don't make excuses, use all of your talents, and excel at everything you do.

So keep up the good fight and don't lose hope. And pass it on to your children. Make sure they get all of their homework done. Make them go to bed on time. Tell them they can go to the movies AFTER their chores are done. Teach them to clean up their dishes, and that they can still brush their teeth even if it is a snow day. Teach them to hope as well. It's now getting light out when they go to school, and staying light out even after supper. Easter break is only five weeks away; the dawn is coming, and remember, the race is not always to the swift, but to he who keeps on running.



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