

## **Never Lose Heart**

If you are having a really bad time in life where nothing seems to go right, do not lose heart. If you are struggling with heart problems, cancer or some other illness, do not lose heart. If you are grieving the death of someone you loved very much, do not lose heart. If you are having problems with a relationship or your family is breaking apart, do not lose heart.

As a matter of fact, never lose heart. This is the message of the Apostle Paul in our reading from Second Corinthians today. The Apostle Paul says this about Christian people, "We do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal glory beyond all measure."

I read a story about a woman who was an ultra marathoner. She would run races 50 even 100 miles long. Talk about never giving up or losing heart! Well, one day she was training in Colorado with her dog on a trail in the mountains. On the run, she hit a patch of ice, slipped 60 feet, and crashed into some rock. She had broken several vertebrae and her pelvic bone too.

She had brought with her some water and a granola bar. But as day turned into night she got cold, and her dog left her and did not return. She had not told anyone where she was going, though she hoped her neighbor would notice that she was gone. She was beginning to lose heart, wondering if she would ever be found alive. Sometime in the night she screamed out begging for help.

This is what God wants us to do when we are in a seemingly helpless, hopeless situation. When we believe life is at it worst, or at least very near its worst, or when feel as if we are losing heart, God wants us to cry out for his help. If you look at the first two verses of our Psalm – Psalm 130, you see one believer in God who is in trouble. He is losing heart and hence he cries out to God for help.

He says, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!" Another believer in God also knows what to do when he is losing heart, he cries out for help in Psalm 121. He says, "I lift up my eyes to the hills--from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Losing heart is impossible when you are human. We are fragile mortal creatures who face some really hard situations in life. Sometimes these situations turn into feelings of being overwhelmed by life. We might feel alone in these moments and begin to wonder if we have any reason for hope. I wonder if you have been in such a situation in your life where you felt as you were losing heart.

When I read the Gospel lesson today, I wondered even if Jesus might have been close to losing heart at times. Here he has been healing the blind and the deaf, curing diseases and casting out demons, calming the seas and walking on water, and what do people begin to say about him? Some of the religious leaders from Jerusalem told people in Jesus' home town, "He has a demon."

Jesus could have said to himself, "What more can I do? They do not believe I am God's Son? Should I just give up?" But he did not say that. He did not lose heart. Instead he spoke hopeful words about what he was doing to the demons. He said, "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man, then indeed his house can be plundered."

How are these hopeful words? With them Jesus is telling us that we do not have to lose heart in this world. He has come into the world to tie up the demons that cause us trouble. He has into the world to plunder those demons and hardships that are a part of our existence. He has come into the world to overcome those circumstances in our lives that tend to leave us helpless and hopeless.

Now, let's go back to our runner who was hurt and stranded in the mountains in Colorado. After two whole days of laying there in the mountains, calling out for help, she was thinking about death. But something inside her, kept reassuring her that she would be ok. She wondered about her dog and where he had gone. She again thought about her neighbor and if she would notice she was missing.

Well, her neighbor did notice she was missing, and she notified local authorities who started a search for her. One officer decided to look for her in a popular trail area where runners like to train. After looking several hours, he discovered her truck and her dog, and the dog led him right to the stranded woman. He called for help and the woman was safe and her life was saved.

This woman cried out for help and she found it. I believe this is the same for you and me as Christian people. We cry out for help and God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is there to hear us, and to help us. In this and many ways, God will take care of us. This is why even in the face of life's hardest moments, the Apostle Paul says we should not ever, we should never, lose heart.

The Apostle Paul even says, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In other words, the Apostle Paul says, even if our situation turns into one where we die, we still do not lose hope or heart, because God has an eternal future and an eternal life in store for us in heaven.

We approach this service of healing today with this in mind: Never lose hope! Indeed, we come seeking God and crying out to him for help. We cry out with

faith, believing God will one way or another help us. We pray for healing. We pray for hope. We pray for many individual situations we face in life. These cries for help are not in vain, because God does hear and God does help

I recently talked with someone about healing services. She told me she had been to one, but God didn't help her. Then she paused for a time, looked up at me, and said, "Well, at least I don't think he helped." She paused again and she said, "Well, he might have helped a little." For this woman, this was a moment of realization that God helps us even if we don't get exactly what we pray for.

Along with the Apostle Paul, I encourage you to never lose heart. This does not mean you will not have struggles in life. But I hope you will always know that God is with you in those struggles. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is with you! He will hear you, help you, heal you, and give you hope. Do not lose heart because you will always stand this God's presence.

Our runner friend was not a believer before her time in the mountains. Now with a husband and two children she admits that miraculous things happened to keep her alive. She is exploring faith because she says that unless a power that is greater than life itself had helped, she would not be here today enjoying the life and family and running career that she loves so much.

Explore your faith too; my friends in Christ, because God is with you and taking care of you. Never lose heart. Even if your body or your mind is wasting away with age, never lose heart. Even if the trouble you face today seems like a mountainous situation, never lose heart. Even if you worried about death for yourself or for someone you love, never lose heart.

And why would you? The God who raised Jesus from the dead is standing with you. This same God is renewing your inner nature and your spirit today and every day. This same loving God gives you a wonderful future, an eternal house not made with hands. This same loving God hears you when you cry out to him and he answers your prayers. Whatever you face now or in the future:

Never lost hope!!! Amen.