

# DO NOT LOSE HEART (01).

**October 05, 2008.**

## **Introduction.**

Two Sundays ago we met to give God thanks for His many mercies towards us. God was praised for answered prayers in several areas of our lives. We had time for a limited number of people to give testimony to God's blessings. But I am sure that if we had more time many others would have stood up and borne testimony to God's goodness and mercies in their daily lives.

As a church we have also seen God's blessings in the work of evangelism. The week at the university was blessed of the Lord. No one expected to have such a hectic week of doing evangelism. Many of you were challenged in various ways in conversing with those who visited the tent. I am sure that the experience of being able to stand up and bear witness to Christ and be publicly identified with the church produced its own benefits in your lives. We have taken note of the other efforts in evangelism and for these we thank God and pray for fruit to be produced to the glory of God. God's clear promise is that the word sown will not return unto Him empty. His word will accomplish what He desires and succeed in the matter for which He sent it forth. (*Isa.55:11*). We are also seeing responses to the church advertisements in the newspaper and responses to our website. For all this we thank God. Most importantly, in all of this, we must give God thanks for those He has saved and made His own children.

We have seen God's blessings in the work of missions. Our involvement in the support of missions has increased. Your generous giving towards missions will not be ignored by the Lord. By your giving you have become partners and participants in the gospel work others are doing in various places around this world. (*Phil.1:5*). God's promise to those who support the work of the gospel, whether at home in our church or on the mission

field is this, “my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (*Phil.4:19*). Keep in mind that the specific context of this promise is the Philippian church’s generous support of the apostle Paul. Paul’s testimony to them was, “I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.” (*Phil.4:18*).

There are several other areas of blessings that we have received from God’s hands that I can share with you this morning. But my focus today is not on the blessings, important as they are. In the midst of blessings we also face testing and trials both individually and as a church. There are those ongoing daily testing and trials we face at home, at work and in other aspects of our lives. And then there are those peculiar testing and trials that come upon us from time to time. It is my prayer that this word the Holy Spirit has placed upon my heart will be of comfort and encouragement to you and will strengthen you to press on in your pilgrimage to your heavenly Canaan.

### **1). A Repeated Exhortation.**

In *Gal.6:9* Paul wrote, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not grow weary.” This verse has three points :

- 1). An exhortation – “let us not lose heart.”
- 2). An assumption – we are doing good.
- 3). A conditional assurance – “we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

The verb “to lose heart” (*ekkakeo*) comes from the Greek word ***kakos*** which means “evil”. ***Kakos*** is the opposite of ***kalos***. The word “good” in *Gal.6:9* is the Greek word ***kalos***. The verb Paul used actually meant “to give in to evil; to give in to difficulty.” Other meanings have been added to this verb : “to lose heart; to grow weary; to become a coward; to lose courage.” The idea in Paul’s exhortation is, “do not quit.”

I want you to note that the literal idea in the verb “to lose heart” is “*to give in to evil*”. In other words, however we may wish to explain the losing of heart from our personal experiences, one clear fact remains, losing heart is the opposite of doing good. Therefore, there is sin involved in losing heart. We shall see this further clarified as we proceed.

Losing heart leads to weariness. Paul’s second Greek verb is ***ekluo***. It literally means “*to loosen out*”. It is the opposite of “**to gird up**”. When you saw a Jew gathering up his loose clothing and tightening it with a belt, you knew he was getting ready to move out in a hurry or to get to work. But when you saw him loosening his belt it meant that either he was finished with his work or that he was abandoning his effort to accomplish the task he had set out to do. ***Ekluo*** conveys the idea that in growing weary you back out of what you were doing. In ***Gal.6:9 ekluo*** describes the loosening of the spirit or the relaxation or loosening of the will. These are the marks of discouragement, the marks of one who has been losing heart.

Paul’s clear exhortation is, “Let us not lose heart in doing good.” Let us not become discouraged in the doing of good. To lose heart and become discouraged will result in you quitting, in abandoning the good work you have been doing. It is not a neutral act to stop doing good because you have become discouraged. Paul’s argument is that if you stop doing good, you have given in to evil. If you abandon the good work you have been doing because you have become disheartened and discouraged, you have given in to evil.

Paul is also making it clear that your reaping the fruits of your good works is certain. “We will reap”, he says. But the reaping is not dependent upon you. The reaping is in God’s hands. He must give you the fruit to reap. He must bring you the increase. In ***1Cor.3:6*** Paul wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” Furthermore, the reaping will take place “in due time”, that is, in the Lord’s appointed time. The reaping time is already set. But that time is within God’s sovereign appointment. So instead of losing heart, growing weary and quitting, we must learn to be

patient and persevere and with humility to wait on God. To lose heart and grow weary is to become impatient with God. To lose heart is to give in to the evil of quitting, of abandoning your good work being done for the Lord.

I want to examine the use of Paul's two primary verbs in God's word. The verb "to lose heart" is found in the following verses :

**Luke 18:1**, "Now [Jesus] was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart."

**2Cor.4:1**, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart."

**2Cor.4:16**, "Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

**Eph.3:13**, "Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulation on your behalf, for they are your glory."

In **2Thess.3:13** Paul's verb is translated, "do not grow weary." Paul wrote, "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good", or "*do not lose heart in doing good.*" Here is a repetition and reaffirmation of the exhortation given in **Gal.6:9**.

In **2Chron.15:7** King Asa was told, "Be strong and do not lose courage." "**Do not lose courage**" also means "*do not become disheartened.*" The literal translation is, "*do not let your hands drop.*" The ancient people regarded the hands as the bodily organ that carried out the functions of the will. The dropping of the hands pictures for us the loss of will to do what is required of us. In **2Sam.4:1** we are told that when Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, heard that Abner had died, "he lost courage", that is, "*his hands dropped.*" **Prov.24:10** warns, "If you are slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited." "**If you are slack**" is the same verb that means to lose courage or to become disheartened.

Paul's second verb is "to grow weary." This verb is used in **Matt.15:32** to describe the physical exhaustion that comes upon a person as a result of long abstinence from food. In this verse our verb is translated "**faint**".

Turn to *Heb.12:3-5*. (read). “So that you may not grow weary and lose heart” is literally, “*so that you may not grow weary and lose heart in your souls.*” The verb “grow weary” is the Greek verb *kameo*. This is a synonym of *ekluo*. *Kameo* was normally used to describe athletes who collapsed from exhaustion. The writer’s second verb, “to lose heart”, is *ekluo*, the same verb that is translated “to grow weary” in *Gal.6:9*. “To lose heart in your soul” is the description of a person who is discouraged, a description of a person with a broken spirit, a description of a person whose will has become loosened. This is the description of a person who has given up, has downed his tools and has walked away. *Prov.17:22* says, “a broken spirit dries up the bones.” *Prov.18:14* says, “The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but a broken spirit who can bear?”

Like Paul, the writer to the Hebrews is recognizing the fact of our human frailty. They are recognizing the fact that we are all prone to lose heart, to become discouraged and to grow weary, to give up. And their exhortation to us is “**do not quit**”. To lose heart is to choose the evil path. It is to give in to evil. It is to forsake the counsel of God and to submit yourself to the unwise counsel coming from a discouraged or broken spirit.

## **II). Causes Of Losing Heart.**

Jesus recognized that we can lose heart. Paul recognized that we can lose heart. The writer to the Hebrews recognized that we can lose heart. What are some of the things that cause us to lose heart? The answer I will set before you is not being set in any order of priority.

**Firstly**, King Asa was a godly king. He had a heart for God. God called him to bring reform in Israel. But the task was not going to be easy. Getting rid of idolatry from the land and restoring the true worship of the Lord would not be easy. It could turn out to be a very distressing job. It is of interest to note that the word “distress” found in

**2Chron.15:6** means “**narrowness.**” It refers to a narrow space that gives the feeling of being hemmed in. This narrowness may produce a sense of being oppressed or distressed. In view of God’s call, the Lord’s prophet exhorted Asa, “But you, be strong and do not lose courage; for there is reward for your work.” (**2Chron.15:7**). Do not lose heart, for is due time you will reap.

I have known from personal experience that bringing about spiritual reform in one’s own life and in the lives of others is a distressing job which is fraught with the danger of losing heart, of growing discouraged. Over the three decades I have worked in this church I have walked this road time and again and more than often I have had to walk it alone. I have also had people say to me time and again, “*haven’t you given up on so and so as yet? Why don’t you just leave them alone to go their own way?*” But their own way is the way of evil and to leave them to go their own way is to give in to their evil.

Bringing spiritual reform into your own life can be very challenging and even distressing. It is not easy to change old sinful habits and habits that you can justify but you know they do not glorify God. It is not easy to separate yourself from the world and to cease walking in the counsel of the ungodly. It is not easy to submit yourself to God in areas that you know will offend and anger loved ones and friends. It is far more easy to compromise, to give in to evil. Sometimes when you look at the spiritual reform that must take place in your life and the cost you may have to pay, you can easily start telling yourself that’s one mountain that is becoming too hard to climb and one price that is becoming too costly to pay.

Seeking to bring about spiritual reform in your own life and in the lives of others will arouse three of your enemies : the world, the flesh and the devil. They are three formidable enemies. They will fight you relentlessly, using every means available to them. When you start losing heart and start growing weary and back-pedaling from the spiritual reform challenges you are facing, remind yourself of the prophet’s exhortation

given to Asa : the work you are called to do is a good work and there is reward for your work.

**Secondly**, Nehemiah was sent by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and complete the building of the temple. The Israelites who were living in Jerusalem and in the surrounding areas were a frightened discouraged people. Those who were left behind after the deportation to Babylon were a pathetic lot. Nehemiah was told they were living “in great distress and reproach” (*Neh.1:3*). Those who returned with Ezra from Babylon were no different. The Israelites were surrounded by enemies. Several influential Israelites were also in a profitable partnership with the enemy.

God was with Nehemiah and he got the people to work with him. The people said to Nehemiah, after listening to his testimony of God’s gracious dealings, “Let us arise and build.” And then we are told, “they put their hands to the good work.” (*Neh.2:18*). The enemies quickly rallied their forces and began their evil work of seeking to stop Nehemiah. They launched one attack after another. They accused the Israelites of rebelling against the king of Babylon. They threatened violence; they mocked; they laughed; they ridiculed; they used false prophets to make prophecies against the Israelites; they spread all kinds of rumors and then they invited Nehemiah to a meeting to discuss the rumors.

What was the goal of these enemies of Israel? *Neh.6:8* says their goal was to frighten the people and cause them to become discouraged. The word “**discouraged**” means to drop their hands and thus cease working. New Christians and even older ones are often asked as they begin to put things right in their lives and rebuild their lives to the glory of God : what are you doing? What are you trying to prove? Ignore these initial attacks and the floodgates would quickly open. What is the goal of the enemy? The goal of the enemy is to dishearten and discourage you and get you to stop. The enemy does not want you to put anything right in your life. The enemy does not want you to rebuild anything in your life. As long as he can keep you in a state of fear, discouragement and distress,

he would be quite happy. While in this condition your life would not glorify God. Your life would be a reproach to the name of God.

**Thirdly**, Jeremiah was given one of the most difficult tasks as a prophet. God had closed the door of mercy on the nation of Israel and was sending on them final judgment. Final judgment was the fearsome and brutal king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. This final judgment would be literally merciless. Jeremiah's job was to tell the Israelites to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and plead for their lives. They must go meekly into captivity. To resist was to die because this judgment was from God. (*Jer.38:2-3*).

The leaders in Israel were not only rejecting Jeremiah's prophecies, they went a step further. In *Jer.38:4* we read, "the officials said to the king [Zedekiah], "Now let this man be put to death, inasmuch as he is discouraging the men of war who are left in this city and all the people, by speaking such words to them; for this man is not seeking the well-being of this people but rather their harm." Note the verb "**discouraging**". "He is discouraging the men of war", that is, he is causing their hands to drop.

Sometimes when truth and reality hit you in the face they can produce in you, firstly resistance and then disheartening and discouragement. The truth could be physical and the consequences not good. The truth could be spiritual and moral and the consequences are a God turned away from you because of your ongoing disobedience to Him and waiting for you with judgment.

King Saul knew what it was to have God turn away from him. In *1Sam.28:15* Saul said, "I am greatly distressed ..., God has departed from me and no longer answers me." When Saul heard God's message of final judgment against him, we are told that he became terrified and he fell to the ground because there was no strength in him. (*1Sam.28:20-21*).

Within the context of Jeremiah's mission discouraging the people with the truth was God's will and good for them. God intended for the truth to save their lives even if the

truth produced discouragement. I am sure there are those in our midst who can testify to this fact. The truth God brought to the surface was discouraging but it saved your life. Sometimes the truth saves your life in physical terms. Sometimes the truth saves your life in spiritual terms.

**Fourthly**, prolonged physical trials can cause you to lose heart and discourage you. We see this clearly exemplified in the life of Job. I wouldn't take the time to examine Job's life here but I would encourage you to read the book of Job. Another example is David. For ten years Saul pursued David with deadly intent. For ten years David lived as an outlaw, hiding from one cave to another to protect his life. In the midst of fleeing David had two excellent opportunities to kill Saul and bring an end to his prolonged physical trials. But he refused because he it was against God's will to murder the Lord's anointed king even if this king was wicked and his plans were to murder you.

One day, utterly discouraged, David declared, "I will one day perish at the hand of Saul." (*1Sam.27:1*). With that declaration David took his family and his followers and crossed over to the land of the Philistines and lived there. Prolonged physical trial took its toll on Joseph and the names of his two sons reflected the fact that he had given up hope of ever seeing his relatives again. (*Gen.41:50-52*).

**Fifthly**, spiritual decline can cause you to lose heart and become discouraged. In *Luke 18* Jesus taught a parable to teach us that we ought always to pray and not to lose heart. (*vs.1*). Anytime you start taking your eyes off the Lord your prayer life will begin to decline. And declension in your prayer life will inevitably lead to losing heart and discouragement.

**Sixthly**, the reality of aging and all the physical debilitations that come upon us as a result of aging can cause you to lose heart. Paul wrote in *2Cor.4:16*, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though out outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." If your focus is on the decaying outer man, you will begin to lose heart and become discouraged. If you are not focusing on the inner man and the

glories to come you will begin to lose heart and become discouraged. If you are not setting your minds on things above, where Christ is, but you are setting your minds on things on this earth, you will begin to lose heart and become discouraged. (*Col.3:1-2*).

**Seventh**, ongoing tribulations can cause you to lose heart. Paul wrote in *Eph.3:13*, “Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.” In *Acts 14:22* Paul and Barnabas assured the young Christians in the churches they planted during their first missionary journey, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Note the verb “**must**”. The verb “**must**” points to divine necessity. The verb “**must**” says this is what God has ordained for us. Jesus said to His disciples in *Jn.16:33*, “In this world you have tribulation.” Paul reminded the Thessalonian believers that we are destined for afflictions. (*1Thess.3:3*). This is God’s unchanging appointment for us while on this earth.

The word “**affliction**” is the Greek *thlipsis*. The basic idea in this word is “**narrow**”. In *Matt.7:14* Jesus said, “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” “**The way is narrow.**” That’s our word. *Thlipsis* came to mean the pressure that crushes. This narrow way is a constricting way that hems you in and starts to crush you. As we shall see, God’s goal in these afflictions is to sanctify you, to make you more like Christ and to prepare you for His eternal kingdom.

The disheartening and discouraging impact of afflictions can double when you see the wicked prospering and, seemingly, living free from God’s judgment. This is what happened to the psalmist in *Psa.73*. Please turn to *Psa.73:2-3, 12-14, 16*. (**read**). I want you to note how far the psalmist had declined spiritually. Take note of the word “**stumbling**.” This verb actually means “**to turn**”. This is the verb that is used to describe King Solomon’s sins of loving Gentile women and turning his heart away to their idols. (*1Kin.11:1-4*). In his great discouragement the psalmist came close to becoming like the wicked he envied.

**Eighth**, God's discipline in your life can cause you to lose heart and become discouraged. *Heb.12:5-6* says, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him. For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." We can respond two ways to God's disciplining us. We can treat it lightly and neglect to pay attention to it. Or we can "**faint**". This is the Greek verb **ekluo**. We can grow weary of God's discipline and manifest the presence of losing heart and discouragement.

I want to close with a very important word of encouragement and Lord willing, next Lord's Day I will seek to close this study. Turn to *Heb.12:3*. (**read**). Consider Jesus. The verb "**consider**" also means "**to reckon up; to count up; to meditate.**" Meditate on Jesus. As you do, meditate also on all He did, all that He endured, all He accomplished for you.

Consider Jesus, your great high priest, who was tempted in all things as you are, and yet without sin. (*Heb.4:15*). Consider Jesus who fully sympathizes with our weaknesses. Consider Jesus who endured every possible form of hostility against Himself from sinners. Reckon on the fact that because of Him there is a day coming when all that the world, the flesh and the devil can do to you will be brought to an eternal end. On that day all the former things of this fallen world would have passed away.

We live in the immediate. We see, feel and experience the immediate. We need to become more Biblical and live in the now and live in the then, that is, the world to come. We need to see, feel and experience the immediate and see, feel and experience the then. We need to learn to live in this world with a heavenly mindedness. We need to learn to live with our eyes focused on the joy that is set before us. Moses lived considering Christ. *Heb.11:26* says Moses lived "considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward."

The verb "**consider**" says you must consider Jesus with urgency. Why? You are always in danger of losing heart. You are always in danger of becoming discouraged.

Like the psalmist, you are always in danger of stumbling. So you need to keep considering Jesus and doing so with a sense of urgency.

What is it are you going through in this life? Are you considering Jesus? Are you considering your sympathetic high priest who was tempted in all things as you are? Are you considering Jesus who is engaged in intercessory prayers on your behalf before His Father? (**Rom.8:34; Heb.7:25**). Like Peter, are you fixing your eyes on the raging waves or are you fixing your eyes on Jesus. When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and fixed them on the raging waves, fear gripped him and he began to sink. If you are already sinking, then cry out like Peter, "Lord save me!" (**Matt.14:22-33**).