

# DO NOT LOSE HEART (03).

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## Introduction.

The apostle Paul wrote in *Gal.6:9*, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” With the Lord’s help I want to begin by reviewing what we covered in the first two studies. “To lose heart” is literally “*to give in to evil*”. The verb came to mean “*to give in to difficulty; to lose courage.*” “To grow weary” literally means “*to loosen out*”. It describes the loosening of one’s spirit or one’s will. These are the marks of discouragement. It is not neutral to lose heart and to stop doing good. It is to give in to evil.

Under the first major point we looked at some of the causes for losing heart. Actually we looked at eight causes for causes for losing heart. We closed our first study with a word of encouragement from *Heb.12:3* which calls upon us to consider Jesus.

In our second study the first major point we looked at was “**doing good**”. The Christian’s life is to be characterized by the doing of good. The opposite to this is losing heart and growing weary. We saw from *2Thess.3:13* that when Paul said, “do not lose heart”, he was forbidding something that had not yet begun to take place in the lives of the Thessalonians.

We saw that the word “good” (Gk *kalos*) describes that which is good in quality and character. But it goes a step further. The word *kalos* also means “beautiful” or “attractive”. One can do good but it can be done in an ugly manner. While the work is good, it is not beautiful because of the negative attitude and conduct of the person doing the good. A good work that is not beautiful does not draw people towards it. Paul is

saying our good works must be beautiful. Our good works must be attractive. They must shine and bring glory to our Father who is in heaven. (*Matt.5:16*). In *1Pet.2:12* we are told two things : (1) our behavior must be **kalos**, excellent, beautiful, attractive; (2) our deeds must be **kalos**, excellent, beautiful attractive.

I did say a lot more about the **kalos** behavior and deeds that must be manifested in our lives. Time will not allow me to review all that was said. But I do want to draw your attention to a new point. Please turn to *Jn.10:11, 14*. (**read**). Three times Jesus described Himself as “the good shepherd”. The statement is emphatic and literally, “the shepherd, the good one.” Jesus is not saying that He is one among many shepherds who happen to be good. Jesus is not comparing Himself with other shepherds. In the words of **Lenski**, “*this shepherd is absolutely in a class by Himself; no other shepherd can be grouped with Him.*” There may be many shepherds in the world but He is in a class all by Himself because He is “the shepherd, the good one.”

The Greek word that is translated “good” is **kalos**. **Kalos** emphasizes Jesus’ uniqueness and excellence. We noted also that **kalos** also means “*beautiful*” and emphasizes the beauty that must be seen in goodness. **William Temple** wrote, “*it is important that the word for “good” here is one that represents, not the moral rectitude (correctness) of goodness, nor its austerity, but its attractiveness. We must not forget that our vocation is so to practice virtue that men are won to it; it is possible to be morally right repulsively!*”

When people say you are a good person, are they saying that you are a morally upright person? If they are, that is good. Are they emphasizing the fact that as a good person you do good works? If they are, that is also good. But the crucial question is this : do they also say that in your good character and good works that you are also morally beautiful? If they are not, then that is bad. Jesus was not only a good person whose life was filled with good works. Jesus was also morally beautiful. His moral beauty attracted people to Him, from the children to the aged. This is why He rebuked His disciples and said to them, “do not hinder the children from coming to Me.” (*Matt.19:14*).

Peter said, “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles.” (*1Pet.2:12*). “Keep your behavior **kalos** among the unsaved.” “Keep your behavior morally beautiful among the unsaved.” If you do not they will slander you and they will have a basis for doing so. Peter did not say keep you behavior morally beautiful among the unsaved but if they begin to attack you, hurt you, curse you, disrespect you, then you let them have it. There is no “**but**” in Peter’s exhortation. There is no exceptive clause in Peter’s exhortation. Peter knew they would they would do evil to you. So Peter said when they do evil to you, you must respond with good deeds and conduct that are morally beautiful.

When you respond with morally ugly conduct and the unsaved asks with contempt in their voice, “*What kind of Christian are you?*”, what are they doing? They are blaspheming the Lord Jesus Christ. Their question is really, “*What kind of Christ is this who is supposed to have saved you and changed you?*” Peter is saying that the unsaved must have no basis for slandering your conduct or your good works. And when they do, it must be that they are telling lies. We identify with, follow and serve the Shepherd who is the good One, the morally beautiful One. He has required that we become like Him, that we imitate Him. Are we becoming morally beautiful like Him before the unsaved? Peter said concerning our morally beautiful Shepherd, “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him to judges righteously.” (*1Pet.2:23*).

### **The Antidote (continued).**

The second major point we began to look at was the antidote for losing heart. The **first antidote** we saw is the Biblical realization that God does not grow weary of His elected redeemed children. And He will never abandon His purposes in your life as unrealizable or take a break from them because He is tired and frustrated. If God does not and will not grow weary of you, you have no basis for losing heart. You know that you always have an open door to your Heavenly Father regardless of what is happening in your life. In our

study we saw that the problem is not with God. The problem is with us. God does not become weary of us. But the Lord said to the Israelites in *Isa.43:22*, “you have not called on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary of Me, O Israel.”

The **second** point we noted is that losing heart is a sin that leads to discouragement. Losing heart also had the potential to lead to bitterness and even apostasy. This fact is clearly illustrated in *Psa.73*. We noted that the antidote is repenting of the sin of losing heart and giving careful consideration of the example of our Lord as described in *Heb.12:3*. The verse says, “For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, in order that you may not grow weary in your soul and lose heart.” Jesus triumphed over the hostilities He faced. Jesus triumphed over the greatest trial He faced – the cross. You are called upon to consider Jesus, consider how He dealt with the hostilities He faced and triumphed over them and imitate His example.

The **third** point we looked at is that spiritual decline can cause you to lose heart and become discouraged. One of the first evidences of spiritual decline is a declining prayer life. (*Lk.18:1*). The antidote is to bring a halt to the evidences of spiritual decline by repentance, confession and seeking spiritual help. Turn away from the wrong and turn to and begin practicing that which is right.

The **fourth antidote** to losing heart is to know God : know about God (*Heb.11:6*); know God in salvation (*Jn.17:3*); and know God experientially in His attributes (*Psa.9:10*). We looked at Moses’ prayer, David’s prayer and Paul’s prayer that expressed their deep hunger and longing to know God. *Dan.11:32* says, “the people who know their God will display strength and take action.” The context of this verse is great persecution and distress for the people of God. The people who know God do not lose heart and quit. The people who know God display strength and take action in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Today I want to expand this point some more.

Brethren, I want to clearly state here that being saved is not enough. It is both foolish and dangerous to come to know the Lord in salvation and not pursue an intimate experiential

knowledge of Him. One of the important metaphors of our salvation in Christ is that we become the bride of Christ. What will happen to a marriage if the man and the woman are not actively pursuing a growing experiential knowledge of each other? At best they will have a very poor marriage. At worst, they will end up being divorced.

How often pastors hear these words in the counseling room, *"I thought I knew this man I married but now I realize I do not know him."* **"I thought I knew this woman I married but now I realize I do not know her."** Christian, you are the bride of Christ. How well do you know your Heavenly Husband? Are you growing in your experiential knowledge of your Heavenly Husband?

Let us change the imagery. You belong to the household of God. You are the sons and daughters of God. God is your Heavenly Father. Jesus is your elder Brother. How intimately do you know your Heavenly Father? How intimately do you know your most important elder Brother?

The triune God has revealed Himself to you. God has told you in clear and specific detail what He is like in His word. Are the truths He has revealed about Himself becoming your growing experiential knowledge? In the day of crisis would you discover that the triune God is a total stranger to you? Would you discover that you do not know how to bring your crisis to Him, that you do not know how to cast your burdens upon Him? *Psa.55:22* says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you." *1Pet.5:7* says, "casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you." If you do not know how to do this then the fault would not be His. The fault would be yours.

I want to speak here to you young people because I have deep concerns for you in this matter. Maybe I am wrong but I am not sensing in you a deepening spirituality and growing hunger for God. While the song is a favorite for you, I do not sense in you the psalmist's heart cry : "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?" (*Psa.42:1-2*). I am not sensing in you David's longing to see

God's power and glory. David said, "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and glory." (*Psa.63:1-2*). I am not sensing that yearning to become men and women of God who are in touch with God and manifesting in your life the glory of God.

I want to say to you that being saved and being assured that you are going to heaven are not enough. Your world is entering a period in which it is vitally important for you to have a growing experiential knowledge of the Lord. At age **19** the Lord put it in my heart to begin a pursuit of knowing Him. I was not taught these truths as a young Christian. But I am thankful that the Lord began to open my heart to this reality and I went on my knees day and night with an open Bible before me to seek God, to find God and to know God. Over the years this heart pursuit to know the Lord went through high and low fluctuations. The deepest regrets in my Christian life are those periods when the pursuit of knowing the Lord was at low ebbs. The truth is you pay a price for that, a price that is also regrettable.

But in those high periods of pursuing the experiential knowledge of the Lord, the Lord brought into my life experiences I would not exchange for anything in this world. You may wonder that if those experiences were so wonderful, why did I enter the low periods of not pursuing the Lord? The answer is simple – the sin in our hearts. It is a very frightening thing to begin to understand the nature of the sins that dwell in your heart, the power of those sins, the war those sins wage on your soul and the spiritual distress they bring upon you. The apostle Paul, experiencing the great weight of this spiritual distress sin brought upon him as sin waged war against him, cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" His answer was, "Christ Jesus our Lord." (*Rom.7:24-25*).

On the other hand I am most grateful to the Lord that in those crucial times in my life when I faced life-changing choices and decisions, I was in those high periods of pursuing

the knowledge of the Lord. And so these decisions and choices were made under His clear and unmistakable guidance. I can look back over the last **39** years and know with peace in my heart that the Lord has led me. I am grateful to the Lord that in the major crises I faced in this church I was in those high periods of pursuing the knowledge of the Lord. And each time the Lord made clear to me what the end of those crises would be even before we came to the end. This is why I never wavered even when it seemed that I was facing overwhelming odds.

I want to say to you young people, you are at the point in your life that I was in when I was **19**. And you need the Lord more than you would ever understand. You will be facing many life-changing choices and decisions. Seek the Lord in His revealed word and in prayer. Seek that growing experiential knowledge of the Lord. Pray with Moses, David, Paul and others, "Lord, let me know You." Seek the Lord until you find Him so that you can make your choices and decisions under the clear and unmistakable guidance of the Lord. When that guidance comes to you, you will know. Face your world and all its challenges knowing the Lord. Face the world knowing that you have proven the Lord, that you have in your passing years watershed experiences with the Lord you can return to in order to encourage your soul. When you do, you will not lose heart and grow weary when the times of distress come rolling in like a flood. In those times you will be a *Dan.11:32* person.

One of the serious problems today in Evangelical Christianity is that it has become very deistic. Deism believes in God. Deism believes God created all things. But deism also believes that God is not involved in His creation. Deism believes God has removed Himself from any involvement with His creation. For the deist God is uninvolved, uninterested and really does not care what happens.

I said to you earlier that being saved is not enough. Why? Far too many people are claiming to be Christians, claiming to be saved but they are practical deists. God is not involved in their lives, in the day to day details and functioning of their lives. God has saved them but then they removed themselves from God. God is not the hands-on Lord

of their lives. God is someone they have religious dealings with on Sundays but the rest of the week belongs to them. However, when the crisis comes, these same people run to the God they have turned off and seek to turn Him on. But when God does not respond, God is blamed for not caring and losing heart begins to take over. In such people losing heart can easily run the full course of discouragement, bitterness and apostasy.

I want to say to all of us that we need to carefully examine our hearts. Are you a Christian deist and do not know it? Is God uninvolved in your life? Having devotions every day does not mean that God is involved in your life. Your daily devotions can be a daily religious routine. Let me ask you : when you are finished and you close your Bible do you also close the door of your life on God? Attending services on Sundays and other programs do not mean that God is involved in your life. Attending worship on the Lord's Day can be your weekend religious routine that is totally meaningless. It is meaningless religious routine when you leave God behind as you leave this building. It is meaningless religious routine when you go out into the world and live as a practical atheist, that is, you live as if God does not exist.

In *Isa.29:13* the Lord said, "this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me." Note carefully what the Lord said, "they remove their hearts far from Me." This is the same charge the Lord made against the Pharisees and scribes in *Matt.15:8*. Their drawing near to God was meaningless religious routine because they went out and lived their lives by man-made rules. They went out and lived their lives as if God did not reveal Himself to them, as if they did not have the Old Testament scriptures? Is this charge true of you? Are you living your life as if God did not reveal Himself, as if you do not have a Bible?

True Biblical Christianity demands that God must be intimately involved in your life every moment of every day, whether you are awake or sleeping. God was intimately involved in the psalmist's life. And the psalmist said in *Psa.139:17-18*, "How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You."

God's involvement in your life must be manifested in your thinking, in your speaking, in your decisions, in your choices, in your work ethic, in the use of your money, in your dealings with others, and whatever other activities fill your day.

Joseph, Daniel and Nehemiah, three men who lived their lives in the secular realm, were no deists. God was intimately involved in their lives. In the N.T. we can speak of Barnabas, Aquila, Philemon and Gaius. They were men who for the most part lived their lives in the secular realm. But they were no deists. God was intimately involved in their lives. We can speak of Rahab, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Esther, Priscilla, Lydia and Phoebe as women who were not deists. God was intimately involved in their lives. Is God intimately involved in your life? Do you know God? Are you coming to know God more and more? Or are you a Christian deist?

In *Jer.23:23-24* we read, "Am I a God who is near,' declares the Lord, 'And not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?' declares the Lord." Christianity is not deistic. God is a God who is near. God is near because of His omnipresence. God is near because of His special presence with His people.

Please turn to *Psa.139:1-6*. (**read**). I want you to note that the Lord's intimate knowledge of the psalmist was something the psalmist regarded as wonderful. Now note vs.5, "You have enclosed me behind and before; And You have laid your hand on me." What is the picture here? God is like a security detail in the psalmist's life. God has hemmed him in. God is in front of him, behind him, on his sides and God's hand is on him. Now put yourself in the psalmist's place. That's how near God is to you.

The danger is this : even though God is so near to you, you can ignore Him. You can push Him away. You can treat Him as if He is far off. You can refuse to involve Him in your life, in all the details of your life.

Asaph learned that the special experiential nearness of God was the antidote to the bitterness of soul he was experiencing. Turn to *Psa.73*. Asaph began to lose heart and became discouraged as he saw the prosperity of the wicked and compared them to his own sufferings. (*vss.3, 14*). Such was his discouragement he began to envy the wicked. And he declared, “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure.” (*vs.13*). He began to conclude that following God and living a godly life was useless.

*Vss.21-22* show that Asaph’s losing heart and discouragement led to bitterness, depression, self-pity and irrational behavior. Everything put together brought him perilously close to apostasy. (*vs.2*). If Asaph was alive today he would have been sent to a psychiatrist and put on medication. But Asaph’s problem was spiritual and the cure was spiritual. When Asaph came into the temple to worship God gave him insight and understanding that changed him. (*vs.17*). *Vs.24* says God’s counsel became his guide. Now let us read from *vss.25-28*. (**read**). “But as for me, the nearness of God is my good.” He knew God was near because God said so in His word. But he also knew God was near because he came to know that special experiential nearness of God.

The apostle Paul knew that the antidote to anxiety was the nearness of the Lord and prayer. Anxiety opens the door to losing heart. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (*Phil.5b-7*). The nearness of the Lord and prayer (*Lk.18:1*) will remove anxiety and losing heart and replace them with the peace of God. What is this “peace of God”? To the Jew “**peace**” or **shalom** was more than serenity. **Shalom** is “**well-being**”. And it’s a well-being that surpasses human comprehension. Now note : this peace of God stands as a guard at the door of your heart and your mind, keeping out anxiety and all that accompany anxiety.

The psalmist knew the nearness of God. But he also knew that the nearness of God must not be taken for granted. *Psalms 42, 43, 44* are the despairing heart cries of men who

were experiencing that God was far from them. Three times the question was asked : “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?” (*Psa.42:5,11; 43:5*). In *Psa.42:6* the psalmist declared, “O my God, my soul is in despair within me.” In *Psa.44:9* we read, “You have rejected us.” In *vs.24* the psalmist asked, “Why do you hide Your face and forget our affliction and our oppression?”

What was the answer to their great despair? *Psa.43:3-4* says, “O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling places. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy.” The answer is the presence of God, “God my exceeding joy.” In *Psa.44* the answer is God making His presence known through manifestations of His power and glory as He did in past generations. (*vss.1-3*).

Because the psalmist knew that the nearness of God must not be presumed upon, he prayed as follows :

*Psa.22:19*, “But You, O Lord, be not far off.”

*Psa.35:22*, “O Lord, do not be far from me.”

*Psa.38:21*, “O my God, do not be far from me.”

*Psa.71:12*, “O God, do not be far from me.”

*Isa.55:6* says, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.” *2Chron15:2* says, “the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.” *Jas.4:8* says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

My Brethren, I ask you : do you know God? Do you know the nearness of God? Are you seeking day after day to know God, to experience the special nearness of God? Do you make decisions and choices based upon clear and unmistakable guidance from God?

In **September 1976**, as I prepared to return to my final year of studies in Jamaica, I knew with clear and unmistakable guidance from God that I would be called to be the pastor of this church. This church did not indicate they would be interested in me. Add to this the fact that in my heart I did not want to be the pastor of a city church and I did not want to live in the city. While in Jamaica I turned down every offer to remain there and serve as a pastor. I did so because I knew what was God's will. Then, in early **1977** I received a letter asking me to consider serving in this church. The salary package was a poor comparison to what I was being offered by the Jamaican church I was already pastoring. Yet I accepted the call from this church because I knew I could not go against God's will. The choices I was making were rooted in a more important experience.

In **January 1972** the Lord rooted my life in *Phil.4:6 -7*. On that important night the rules for my life changed. I was just **21**. I was in a good job with much prospect. At the same time I was actively serving the Lord in various ministries and pursuing an intimate knowledge of God. I was coming to know God in ways that amazed me. That night the Lord literally put me to an end game test. His command was very clear : leave your job and come follow Me. Fear and stress gripped me. Tears were flowing freely. Questions were flooding my mind and each time the answer was simple : "be anxious for nothing." After what seemed like an eternity I surrendered to the Lord and the peace of God flooded my soul. The next day I went to work and resigned my job. And my life's journey with God began. It has not been a perfect journey because I am a sinner. And I have had to learn by hard lessons that I cannot change the rules God imposed on me.

And I do want to say this : despite all the negative things and hardships I have had to endure at the hands of various people in various places, I would not exchange this life for any other. And if I knew ahead of time what I would have to face, I would still make the same choice I made in **January 1972**. Seeing the life changing grace of God at work in your lives and in the lives of so many others far outweigh any hardships I had to endure over the years.

I want to make myself clear here. I am not saying to you young people that to know God means your life will have to follow the path my life followed. But I am saying that you are not too young to seek God and know God in ways that will astound you. The fact is, now is the time for you to seek God because now you will be making decisions that will set the course of your life. Now is the time for you to have God's clear and unmistakable guidance. Some of you have already made choices. But let me ask you : do you know with clear and unmistakable guidance from the Lord that you are in the center of His will for your life? So many people decide on the basis that an open door is God's will. I had an open door with greener pastures in Jamaica. But that was not God's will.

In closing I want to turn you to *Psa.78:1-7*. (**read**). Fathers and mothers I want to address you. It is a very sad reality in the history of the church that there many who, in the closing decade of their life, become spiritually cold and, as it seems, even spiritually lifeless. They are not a rich spiritual resource for younger Christians. They are not manifesting the joy of the Lord, or as Peter puts it, they are not "greatly rejoic[ing] with joy inexpressible and full of glory." (*IPet.1:8*). You do not see heavenly-mindedness in them. Their affections are not set on things above. (*Col.3:2*). There is no increasing hunger in them for seeing the Lord face to face. Instead they have lost heart. They have grown weary. They have ceased to do good. Instead they have a spiritually deadening effect on the younger Christians. Do these things describe you?

Are we leaving behind the evidences of God's wondrous works that says to our children that they should put their confidence in God and not forget His works? Are we leaving behind a life marked by the experiential knowledge of God? Are we leaving behind a life that says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (*Phil.1:21*). The cry of the psalmist in *Psa.44* was, "*Lord, you manifested Your power and glory in great works for our fathers. We want You to do the same for us. We want to see Your power and glory and wondrous works in our generation.*" Will our children be able to pray *Psa.44*?

Fathers and mothers, do you know God? Do you know the nearness of God? Are you sharing with your children what God is doing in your life? Are you storing up for them a rich reservoir of God's wondrous works that they can turn to when they need it most? Are they seeing in your life that God is faithful and His promises are yea and amen? Are they seeing in you a ***Dan.11:32*** person? Will they say of you, "***My father knew God. My mother knew God***"? Let us think carefully about these things and let us begin to aspire to the holy goal of becoming men and women of God who know God.