

DO NOT LOSE HEART (04).

November 16, 2008.

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." "**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.

I want to briefly outline what we have covered in the last three studies before turning your attention to today's study. In our first study we looked at eight causes for losing heart. The list was not exhaustive. We can add a ninth cause this morning from *Psa.55:12-14*. (**turn**). In these verses we find that the betrayal by a trusted friend caused the psalmist to become disheartened. The psalmist, David, wrote, "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; We who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng."

It is clear here that David's pain is very intense because of his personal relationship with the one who betrayed him. In *vs.13*, "it is you" is emphatic. The betrayer is identified as one equal in status, a companion, a close friend, a confidant and a fellow-worshipper. The word "fellowship" pictures this person as no ordinary confidant. He was no ordinary counselor. He was an intimate confidant and counselor. Here was one who knew things about David that no one else would know. The betrayer's treachery was so

great it prompted David to pray for the betrayer's death. I am sure many of you can identify with the betrayal and pain David suffered. I know I can. And I assure you that if you haven't walked this road as yet you will walk do so one day.

In our second study we began to look at the antidote to losing heart. We looked at four points. The fourth point was that you need to know God. This fourth point was further developed in our third study. The Christian must know the God who has revealed Himself to us via His word. In other words, your mind must be filled with the knowledge of God's revealed word. But head knowledge must become heart experience. The Christian must come to know God experientially. This pursuit of knowing God in His word and in your experience is a lifetime pursuit. Coming to the end of his life Paul is found still praying, "that I may know Him." (*Phil.3:10*).

In our study I dealt with the serious problem of a Christian Deism that exists in the Evangelical church today. The Deist says God is real. God is true. God has revealed Himself. But God has no ongoing involvement in His creation. God has no ongoing involvement in the church. And God has no ongoing involvement in your daily life as a Christian. There are many Christians today who, when they lose heart like Asaph did, and when losing heart turns to discouragement, anger, bitterness, depression, self-pity and irrational behavior, they do not turn to God for help. They do not find help in God as Asaph did. They do not even know how to find help in God. Instead Christians are rushing to the offices of psychologists and psychiatrists to find help.

In the words of *Jer.2:13* the Lord said, "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters," and they have turned to "broken cisterns that can hold no water." In other words, Christians are turning to people who have no solutions for their problems. They do not know the truth found in *Isa.28:29*, "This also comes from the Lord of hosts; He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom." (*ESV*).

Asaph's cure was God, God's counsel and God's nearness. (*Psa.73:17, 25, 28*). Paul's cure was God, prayer and "the peace of God." (*Phil.4:6-7*). As we saw, for the Jew,

“peace” is not simply serenity. “Peace” is “*well-being*”. Well Brethren, with this brief review, I want to turn your attention now today’s study.

The Antidote (contined).

The **fifth** point I want to deal with today is something that is close to my heart for variety of reasons. Most of the reasons gather with us week by week for worship and prayer. Another reason is that I am standing on the boundary lines of this field of play. The fifth point has to do with aging. Please turn to **2Cor.4:16-18**. (**read**). If the Lord is pleased to spare our lives and grant us the allotted **70** years or more, the reality we will all face is that of aging and all the debilitations, pains and diseases that come with aging.

When Paul said, “though our outer man is decaying”, he means that our physical bodies will undergo steady irreversible decay. He means that we are moving steadily and irreversibly towards the grave. He means that whatever you may do, you will never be able to recapture your youth when your years of youth have ended. Paul is not saying here that after a certain point you should not care for your health. Paul wants you to understand what God has designed as our inevitable end because of mankind’s fall into sin.

Satan promised Adam and Eve, “you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (**Gen.3:5**). Become God and you will not need God. The satanic deception today is that you do not need eternal life that comes to you after death. What you need is eternal youth. Billions of dollars are being spent in our world to preserve health and youth. The real goal of cloning is eternal life on earth. But the reality is you will die. God said you will grow old and die. Man will never find a cure for aging and death. And so in the words of the prophet Amos, “Prepare to meet your God.” (**Amos 4:12**).

I speak to you this morning as one who is beginning to experience the physical realities of aging. And I am learning the lessons of how to adjust to or ignore pain. I always

thank God for the health He has given to me over the years. I am most grateful that up to this point I have not had any ongoing major health concerns. But I know I can feel in my body the onset of the physical decay Paul spoke about. I pray more and more now about my health and that God would give me the grace I would need as I grow older. As a matter of fact I find myself turning more and more to *Psa.71* and praying especially *vss.17-18* which says, “O God, You have taught me from my youth, and I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.”

Now when Paul said, “we do not lose heart”, there is the implicit recognition that we can lose heart as we grow older and aging problems, debilitations and diseases begin to take hold. The verb “to lose heart” is our primary verb and as you know, it also means “to give in evil”. The idea is that if you begin to lose heart as aging takes hold, you will begin to give in to evil. You will refuse age gracefully. You will find yourself in a futile fight against God’s decreed design for life. You will quickly discover that you cannot win that fight and you will begin to lose heart. As you know, losing heart easily leads to anger with God, frustration, bitterness, and depression. Like Asaph, this can also bring you into the path of apostasy.

In this context, Paul’s use of the verb, “we do not lose heart”, assumes a condition that is true. The verb is present tense. The idea is that it must be true of every Christian that as we begin to age and experience the debilitations and diseases of aging that we do not lose heart.

Why is it that in this matter of aging the Christian must not lose heart? The answer is found in the contrast Paul has set for us. The contrast is between the aging of the outer man or physical body and the ongoing renewal of the inner man or the spiritual man. The verb “**renew**” is also present tense and emphasizes continual renewal. In other words, while the outer man is aging, growing weaker and dying, the inner man must be experiencing repeated spiritual renewal and increasing spiritual strength.

Now, what I am about to say does not apply only to those who are aging. It applies to every Christian. If you do not want to lose heart, change your focus. Life on this earth is temporal. Do not neglect the temporal realities but at the same time let your primary focus be on the eternal realities that are awaiting you, eternal realities you would have already begun to experience in Christ. Do not focus on the afflictions you experience in this life. These afflictions are “momentary” and “light”. “Momentary” emphasizes the shortness of the period in which you will experience these afflictions. In contrast to eternity, “momentary” is but a second. “Light” means that these afflictions are but a weightless trifle.

Note this : “afflictions” is *thlipsis*, the pressure that crushes. This pressure feels like a heavy load. But what Paul is saying to us is that this heavy load is a weightless trifle when compared to the “eternal weight of glory” waiting for us. Paul is a Jew who is writing with a Jewish mindset rooted in the O.T. The Hebrew word for “glory” in the O.T. literally means “heavy”. The weightless trifle of affliction is set in contrast to “the eternal weight of weighty glory.” It is also glory “far beyond all comparison” or more literally, “*from excess unto excess.*” If you do not want to lose heart, change your focus from weightless trifling afflictions and to eternal weight of weighty incomparable glory.

Now turn to *Col.3:1-2*. (**read**). Far too often, Brethren, we are so earth-bound and our minds are rooted on earthly things. Paul is saying, change your focus. “Set your mind on the things above.” Let your minds become heaven-bound and rooted on heavenly things. It has been said that when Christians become heavenly minded they are no earthly good. That’s not true. That’s a satanic lie. The truth is, the more heavenly minded you become, the more earthly good you are. And if heavenly mindedness is not making you a better person on earth, then you are not truly heavenly minded.

Heavenly mindedness means you live on this earth according to God’s kingdom rules. This ties in with the prayer Jesus taught us, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (*Matt.6:10*). This ties in with the exhortation and

promise, “Seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (*Matt.6:33*). The heavenly minded person lives on earth with his eyes fixed on Christ, with his eyes fixed on the eternal glories to come.

Brethren, the point is this : as you grow older you must be growing stronger and stronger in Christ. You must be experiencing a deepening relationship with Christ. You must be experiencing a daily renewal of your spirituality. Younger Christians must begin to see in you an increasing Christ-likeness. Younger Christians must begin to see in you an increasing hunger for more and more of Christ and the glories to come. Younger Christians must be seeing in you the absence of losing heart and the presence of increasing joy in Christ. Younger Christians must be seeing in you how to age gracefully in the midst of your aging afflictions, debilitations and diseases. They must be seeing in you the holy conflict of battling diseases and welcoming diseases because you know that one of these diseases will be your door into eternity.

Younger Christians must begin to see in you the gradual, yet graceful, peaceful and joyful, letting go of life on this earth and an increasing grip on the life to come. They must begin to see a mind that is more and more in heaven and in the presence of Christ and less and less on this earth. They must see in you a pilgrim standing on Jordan’s banks not looking back but looking intently forward with a face beginning to shine like the face of Moses.

Younger Christians must also begin to see in you what Paul expressed in *Phil.1:23-24*, “But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.” I know in my heart that I am beginning to experience Paul’s conflict. I love you enough to want to live on for your sakes as long as the Lord wills. I love my family enough to want to live on for their sakes as long as the Lord wills. As I indicated, I often pray *Psa.71:17-18*. But I also know that to depart and be with Christ is very much better. After **32** years of the pastoral labors, battles and wars, there is also the desire to hang up the spiritual weapons of our warfare.

My beloved aging Brother, my beloved aging Sister, do not lose heart. Set your minds on things above. Seek day by day to draw nearer to Christ. Pray that the Lord will give you the grace to bear the burdens of aging. Surround yourself daily with gospel music and keep filling your minds with the word of God. Take time each day to meditate on God's great unfailing unchanging love for you, His grace and mercy towards you in saving you (*Eph.2:4*) and the daily manifestations of His lovingkindness and faithfulness towards you. (*Lam.3:22-23*).

I want to say to you who are younger, take time to visit with those who are aging. Pray with them, read God's word to them, sing for them their favorite songs, call them for time to time. Let them know how much you love them and rejoice in God over them and the example of their faith in Christ. Make plans and take them out. Fellowship with them. Let them tell you about their love for Christ and recount for you some of the history of their walk with Christ. Let them recount for you how the Lord saved them. Do not let them lose heart.

This brings us to the **sixth** and final point I want to deal with. The sixth antidote for losing heart is that you must work out and embrace the practical reality of *Rom.8:28* in your life. (**turn**). A verse that can be coupled with *Rom.8:28* is *Phil.1:6*. Paul wrote, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Turning now to *Rom.8:28*, Paul wrote, "And we know that God works all things together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." You would notice that I changed the translation a little and left out the verb "**causes**". What Paul said was more direct and emphatic. Paul did not say, "*God causes to work.*" Paul said, "God works." A more literal translation is, "And we know that to the ones loving God, He works all things together for good, to the ones being called according to His purpose." Now let us note the following :

Firstly, the context of *vs.28* is sufferings and tribulations. This is made clear in *vs.18* and *vss.35-39*. *Vs.18* says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Secondly, *Rom.8:28* is for Christians only. Paul is addressing Christians. They are described as “those who love God, ... those who are called according to His purpose.” You would note in the literal translation that the expression, “the ones loving God”, comes early in the sentence. Paul is emphasizing this description of Christians. **Leon Morris** noted, “*It is a very impressive way of characterizing [Christians]; love is central in the life of the Christian.*” The Christian loves God. We love God because He first loved us. (*1Jn.4:19*).

The first part of Paul’s description focuses on what Christians do. They love God. The second part of Paul’s description focuses on what God has done and continues to do. Christians are described as “called”. They are called by God. This is God’s effectual call which irresistibly ushers the Christian into saving fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. According to *vs.30* this call is inextricably linked to predestination, justification and glorification. We must note also that the Christian is effectually called according to God’s purpose, that is, according to God’s determinate and eternal purpose. In other words, your salvation in Christ is God’s decreed eternal purpose or plan. Your salvation in Christ and you loving God are no accidents or strokes of luck.

Thirdly, Paul said, “we know”. Paul did not say, “we hope.” Paul did not say, “we feel.” Paul said, “we know”. This is no sentimental drivel from Paul. This is an expression of absolute certainty. This is akin to what Paul said in *Phil.1:6*, “For I am confident.” Paul’s confidence was permanent and unshakeable and rooted in the God who began His good work in the Philippian believers and who will perfectly finish this good work in the Philippians. In *Rom.8:28* Paul’s unshakeable confidence is rooted in the sovereign God who works and who cannot be resisted or thwarted. In *Isa.43:13* the Lord declared, “I act and who can reverse it?”

Now Brethren, it is important for you to keep in mind that the Paul who declared “we know” is the same Paul who wrote in *2Cor.11:25-27*, “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.” In *2Cor.4:8-9* Paul said he was “afflicted in every way ... perplexed ... persecuted ... struck down.” In *Gal.4:12-15* he spoke of the terrible eye disease he had to live with. This is the man who said, “we know.” The man who said “we know” was not living in the lap of luxury.

The *fourth* fact I want you to note is that God is at work in our lives. The God who is at work in our lives is sovereign, omnipotent and omniscient. He is working ceaselessly, energetically, and purposefully on our behalf. But He is not working by guess. There are no “oops” in His working. In His working He never pauses and says, “*Oh well, that didn’t go too good. Well, let Me try something else.*” The God who is at work in your life is working according to a predetermined and set plan.

The *fifth* fact I want you to note is that God is at work for the good of His people. God is at work in your life for your good. **John Stott** wrote, “*the ‘good’ which is the goal of all His providential dealings with us is our ultimate well-being, namely our final salvation. Verses 29-30 make this plain.*” The primary focus of the good God is working is spiritual and eternal. This is the assurance we also have in *Phil.1:6* and the promise is that the good work God has begun He will perfect it. He will perfectly complete it.

The *sixth* fact I want you to note is that God works for our good in all things. “All things” include everything in your life, whether mental, physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual. *Psa.135:3* says, “Praise the Lord, for the Lord is

good.” *Psa.31:19* says, “How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You.” This God who is good has stored up great goodness for you and He takes everything in your life, whether good or bad, and works them for your good. Quoting from **Stott** again, he wrote, *“all that is negative in this life is seen to have a positive purpose in the execution of God’s eternal plan. Nothing is beyond the overruling, overriding scope of [God’s] providence.”*

I have emphasized the fact that the primary focus of this good is spiritual and eternal. But the focus of this good is not limited to the spiritual and eternal. God is able to take the “all things” and also work them for your physical and / or material good.

The point in *Rom.8:28* is that all that is happening in the world generally and in your life specifically is not the random mess it may sometimes appear to be. It is not a random mess because God is at work in all that is happening. It is not a random mess because God is in sovereign control of all that is happening. It is not a random mess because everything is happening according to God’s determinate eternal plan. It is not a random mess because the God who loved you from eternity and saved you has your good at heart in all that is happening.

Now Brethren, there are many things that will happen in your life or in the lives of people close to you and you will be left wondering and asking : how is this for my good? How is this good for my spouse, my child, my brother or sister, or my friend? And the answer will be that you do not know. In this sense you will be like Paul who said he was “perplexed”. (*2Cor.4:8*). This verb also means *“to be at a loss; to be in doubt.”* Paul said he was, “perplexed, but not despairing.” The verb “despairing” means *“to be completely baffled.”* So Paul said he was perplexed but not completely baffled. Why? The answer is in one word, **“God”**. God was in sovereign control and working. Paul could not understand what God was doing. Paul knew that God’s ways are higher than man’s ways. (*Isa.55:8*). But he knew enough to know that God knew what He was doing and he could trust God.

On the other hand, Brethren, I want to say that if you think carefully and prayerfully about an event in your life, you may see some of the good that God is working. Let me expand a little here. How many Christians are there who did not take God or their Christianity seriously until God gave them a severe jolt? The severe jolt was perplexing and baffling. But at the same time the severe jolt drove them to their knees in prayer and to the reality that they must take God and their Christianity seriously. The severe jolt drew them closer to God and to a life of greater obedience to God's word. *Psa.119:67* says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word."

Drawing into a closer walk with God because of the severe jolt does not mean that God may decide not to change the impact of the severe jolt. An example here is Jacob and God's dealings with him at Penuel. (*Gen.32:24-32*). When God was finished dealing with Jacob, Jacob received great spiritual good. But on the physical side Jacob was left limping. With each step that limp reminded Jacob how God met with him and dealt with him.

Joseph found out many years later that the evil his brothers did to him was for good. Joseph said to his brothers, "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." (*Gen.50:20*). The good was Joseph's spiritual development, exaltation in Egypt and saving the lives of his father's household during the famine. But Joseph was not immune to the evils and sufferings he had to endure during those years. When Joseph was imprisoned he said, "I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." (*Gen.40:15*). In other words, "*I do not deserve this.*"

Joseph named his first son "**Manasseh**", which means, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." In other words, Joseph had given up hope of ever seeing his father and brothers again. His second son was named "**Ephraim**", which means, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." Note how he describes Egypt. Egypt is "the land of my affliction." (*Gen.41:51 – 52*).

God took Job through a most torturous journey of loss, pain and betrayal so that He could expose to Job the sins hidden in his heart, bring Job to repentance and greater blessings. At the end of that journey Job discovered the good. But throughout the journey Job had much difficulty seeing the good that God was working.

The N.T. example I want to set before you is Paul. Please turn to *2Cor.1:1-11*. In these verses Paul tells us that he and those with him went through a very great affliction in Asia. The affliction was so great, they feared they would die. Paul said in *vs.8*, “we despaired even of life.” Why did God put them through such a terrible ordeal that brought them so close to death? Note *vs.3-4*. (**read**). God’s intent was to deliver them and comfort them so that they would be able to comfort others. In other words, if Paul said to you in your trials, “*I know what you are going through*”, those would not be empty words.

The astounding lesson here is this : God put Paul through this great affliction so that Paul could bring true comfort to others who would be afflicted. The experience was very painful for Paul. But it was also good for Paul. He learned afresh that his trust must not be in himself but in God. (*vs.9*). He learned afresh the importance of having many others pray for him. (*vs.10-11*). But very importantly he also learned that God’s dealings with him were not only for his own benefit. They were also for the benefit of others.

I want to say to you men whom the Lord would be pleased to bring into the diaconate : there is an important lesson here for you also. Look over your life and your unanswered questions and maybe you will find your answer here. The benefit is for those whom you would serve. And prepare yourself for experiences that would be for your good. But very importantly God will bring these experiences into your life so you could truly help others who are in distress and bring true comfort to them.

The final passage I want you to turn to is *Psa.22:1-5*. (**read**). God is the God of the covenant community of Israel. But for David, God was also “my God.” “**My God**” is equivalent to “**my Father**”. Three times David cried out from his deep despair, “my

God, my God, ... O my God.” David’s desolation over God’s refusal to answer is literally overwhelming. He cannot see the good in God’s silence. He is perplexed. He is distressed. David’s trust in God is rooted in the covenant faithfulness of God’s past dealings with the nation of Israel. (*vss.4-5*). In *vss.4-5* the three-fold “in You ... to You ... in You” is emphatic and set in contrast to the three-fold “My God, my God, ... O my God.”

Now note very importantly, in the midst of his deep despair and God’s silence David does not lose faith and turn on God with anger and accusations. Instead we find an amazing and emphatic confession in *vs.3*, “Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.” Despite God’s silence and refusal to answer David maintains that God is holy and that God is sovereign and in sovereign control. Many years later we would find a similar response from the sons of Korah in *Psa.44*. I would urge you to study this psalm.

Now Brethren, let me ask you : is your faith rooted in the practical reality of *Rom.8:28* and *Phil.1:6*? If your faith is not grounded in the truths taught in these verses, you would lose heart when distressing times come upon you and you cannot see the good in what is happening to you. If your faith is grounded in these truths, you will find comfort and solace in God even when you are greatly perplexed over God’s dealings with you.

In summary, the answer for losing heart is God, knowing God and trust God. He is the God of *hesed* - lovingkindness, covenant faithfulness, unfailing love and unchanging love. He is the all wise God whose infinite ways are far beyond the understanding of our finite minds. He sees the beginning from the end because He planned the beginning from the end. He sees the bigger picture and the final picture because He is painting the picture. What He has planned for you, eye has not seen and ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the greatest imaginations of your heart. (cf. *1Cor.2:9*).

If you are here today and you are not a Christian, you are not here by accident. God has brought you here. You can be sure of this much : God has brought you here to hear His

word. The Bible says God does not want you to perish, that is, to die in your sins and be cast into hell. God wants you to repent and be saved. He wants you to put your faith in His beloved Son for the forgiveness of your sins and eternal salvation. What will you do with this gracious opportunity God has given to you? You need to answer.