

## **Don't Lose Heart!**

Have you enjoyed the Olympics? What I have been permitted to watch, I have certainly enjoyed. Paul was no stranger to these games. As a matter of fact, on more than one occasion he makes reference to the contests. My favorite reference is I Corinthians 9:24-27: *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”* This passage has been a life motivation for me to minister in such a way that when I stand before Jesus, I might be so privileged to hear, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant...”* (Matthew 25:21). The eclectic apostle was encouraging the disciples of our Lord to keep their body under control so the spirit, rather than the flesh, triumphs in the victory Christ has afforded us through His Gospel. He was using this parallel to also inspire and buoy us up to not lose heart in this great “spiritual decathlon.”

Last week I was observing one of our American athletes preparing for the race. The youngster had her “game face” on with a look of concentrated determination. As I compared her to her competitors, I mentioned to my wife and daughter that I believed she was going to win. She had heart! As she was clearing the last hurdle I saw it! She lost heart. Her determined look melted into a sad dejecting, even downward gaze as she slowed, faltered and barely cleared the last hurdle. She cleared the hurdle, but lost the gold. It wasn't her opponent (in my opinion), that took her as much as it was her loss of drive of heart. There is a verse in the Bible that speaks strongly to this issue: Proverbs 13:12: *“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.”* When we maintain heart, we accomplish God's will for our life. This verse is telling me, instead of choosing to believe we can succeed, but instead chose to believe we may fail, our heart becomes sick. When a person is sick, they don't perform up to the level they know they can. In our jobs, schooling and the work of the Lord, we must not lose heart! Half the battle is either won or lost over this issue. How do we maintain heart? There are two concepts I want you to lay hold of today and never let these two truths escape you:

### **1. Guard all incoming information.**

When the spies of Israel brought back a word of extreme pessimism, please observe the results, *“And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight”* (Numbers 13:32, 33). Forty years later the great Caleb sadly reminisced the influence of the negative information: *“Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God”* (Joshua 14:8). God Himself used the terrifying report of the might of Israel through her God to soften the ground for victory as seen in Joshua 2:11 when Rahab said, *“And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”*

The Bible says, *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). I appreciate the definition of the word “keep” from Brown, Driver, Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon: “1) to guard, watch, watch over, keep 2) to preserve, guard from dangers 3) to keep, observe, guard with fidelity 4) to guard, keep secret 5) to be kept close, be blockaded. I especially like the

phrase, “be blockaded.” This means we seal off an area or place to prevent any goods or people from entering or leaving. We must carefully guard our heart! And we do this best when we:

## **2. Give God an undivided heart.**

*“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways”*

(Proverbs 23:26). Jesus said, *“And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand”* (Mark 3:24). We must give God one hundred percent of all we are. It is full dedication that God blesses.

### (a) The undivided heart is a holy heart.

The fullness of God is granted to those who have nothing between them and their Savior. These are they who are holy in heart, understanding as the Psalmist did, *“Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts...”* (Psalm 51:6). Christ said, *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8).

### (b) The undivided heart is a loving heart.

In this area there can be no compromise: *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment”* (Mark 12:30). We must not give up! If we find our heart like faltering, failing and wandering, let us pray for God to help us love Him. One of my personal and most often requested prayers is, “Lord I love thee; help me to love thee more.” Claim II Thessalonians 3:5, *“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God...”* (II Thessalonians 3:5). The song, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* says, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart, oh take and seal it! Seal it for thy courts above.” Although written hundreds of years ago, the burden is still the same.

### (c) The undivided heart is a longing heart.

Since our heart is too often prone to wander, what shall we do to remedy this? We must, with longing, focus on Jesus...continuously! God’s Word says, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). In *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer said, “From all this we learn that faith is not a once-done act, but a continuous gaze of the heart at the Triune God.”

Our Lord said, *“The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness”* (Luke 11:34). If we fill our vision with Jesus, we are immersed in light! *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (I John 1:7). Keep your eye on the prize, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and we shall never lose heart. Christ is soon coming, we are rounding the last proverbial bend; don’t lose heart now! He loves you so much; give Him your best. He’s got two thumbs up, way up waiting for you at life’s finish line.

- Pastor Pope -

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