
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

July 5, 2015

Overcoming Defeat

“Then a heavenly angel appeared to him and strengthened him.”

Luke 22:43 (Common English Bible)

Three weeks ago our daughter, Rachael, caught a flight from Fort Lauderdale International to Vancouver, British Columbia to begin her new career as a professional photographer aboard the Volendam, Holland America Cruise Lines. Naturally, she was a bundle of energy, a mixture of excitement for the opportunity and concern for whether she had prepared sufficiently for the journey. She had made an eight-month commitment to Holland America which meant she would be away from our home for that length of time. A crucial question was if she had packed all she would need for that time away.

The question of adequate preparation, of securing adequate resources for a journey touches each one of us. The closer we move to the time of departure that question can become overwhelming. Have we enough for both what we anticipate and for what we cannot see? Will we have all that we need to triumph over all unforeseen challenges? It is well for any of us to experience some measure of anxiety about these questions. Only the foolish begin a journey without thought of what may be required.

An equally important question is do we have the spiritual resources to conquer what is inevitable to us all, moments of discouragement, disillusionment and exhaustion? How will any of us keep the fire of a true devotion to God burning when life thrust us into a crisis? Descending upon us like a sudden tornado, our sheltered and comfortable life can be swept away in a moment by rough winds. With a life now wrecked and in a ruined heap the enemy of defeat lingers near, ready in a moment to destroy us. Defeat is a worthy adversary. Is our faith sufficient for the strain?

That day comes to all of us, the day when we experience a desolating sense of human weakness and an inadequacy sweeps over us. It is a day when the road becomes steeper and the journey lonelier than any of us could have ever imagined. It is precisely on this day that we must remember that as followers of Jesus we have more than our natural resources; that there is more available to us than what we packed for the journey. In that testing hour we have a supernatural resource, an outer power that is as sturdy as an oak and as intense as the sun. For Jesus that power was received from a heavenly angel. For us that strengthening angel may be some shining truth from the Bible, an encouraging word from a friend or a quiet strength received from time in prayer. The angel that comes appears differently to each of God's children. But the angel does come. We need only to keep our eyes – and hearts – wide open that we not miss it.

Prayer: Father, rescue me from a despair that anticipates nothing from You. Open my eyes and tune my ears to the rustling of Your presence and strength in my time of discouragement and weakness. In Christ's Name, I ask. Amen

Doug Hood