

DON'T LOSE HEART

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Do you ever get discouraged? Have you ever grown faint-hearted, weary of pressing on? Do the difficulties, disappointments, or distractions around you tempt you to lose heart? Undoubtedly we all have experiences in life that are discouraging. But the Word of God in several passages says “do not lose heart” and explains why we should not. How can we keep from losing heart?

Focus on the inner man and the eternal glory to come. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “So *we do not lose heart*. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18). The contrasts in these verses are striking: outer vs. inner; decay vs. renewal; light vs. weighty; affliction vs. glory; visible vs. invisible; transient vs. eternal. Paul’s efforts to fulfill his service to Christ led him to suffer afflictions and persecutions. But he was not crushed. He was not brought to despair (vv. 7-10). What was his secret? He focused on the inner man and the eternal glory to come.

The source of our discouragement is often a result of our tendency to put too much attention on the outer, physical circumstances of our lives, rather than looking to the cultivation of the inner self and the eternal hope that awaits us. Remember that this life here, with all its troubles, is transient. Keep your eye on the eternal.

Look to Jesus. “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, *so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted*” (Heb. 12:3). Life is compared to a long-distance race that requires endurance to finish. How can we run that race successfully? By “looking to Jesus...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross” (v. 2). In Jesus we have a perfect role model, goal, and inspiration. Remember what he went through. Observe how he patiently and righteously endured suffering, and then “follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). See how he was tempted in all things, yet without sin. Fix your eyes on the one whose suffering was marked by obedience to his Father (Heb. 5:8). What a great example and mentor we have in Jesus!

Stay busy doing good for others. “And *let us not grow weary of doing good*, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10). “As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good” (2 Thess. 3:13). One of the best antidotes to discouragement is that, instead of focusing on our own troubles, we give ourselves to helping others who need us. This, too, is the essence of the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:4-5).

Stay faithful and persistent in prayer. “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always *to pray and not lose heart*” (Luke 18:1). The parable, of course, was the story of the importunate widow who never gave up in making her persistent, repeated requests until they were answered. The lesson is how important it is for disciples to be faithful in prayer. There is a correlation between being faithful in prayer and not losing heart. Faithfulness in talking to God is a remedy for anxiousness and it has the promise of the peace of God (Phil. 4:6-7). And sometimes unfaithfulness in prayer is itself a result of having lost heart. So we need to be sure

not to grow weary in prayer. Whatever may happen in life, whatever troubles may come, don't ever give up on God.