

Devotion: May 20, 2020

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

13 But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—'I believed, and so I spoke'—we also believe, and so we speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. ¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, ¹⁸because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What sorts of things cause us to "lose heart" today? Few of us ever face the kind of persecution Paul and other first-century Christians experienced -- yet we might be experiencing some kind of loss of spirit these past weeks.

Fear is one of the biggest boogymen clutching at our chest cavity today. Some of us fear for our health, some worry about where they live -- crime is everywhere and all inclusive. Fear robs us of any sense of security and steadiness in our lives. When our hearts can't even feel safe at home, our spirits get sick. Chaos seems to reign supreme. All our high-tech security systems, electronic bugs and sanitizers and beepers don't seem to be able to keep it away. We slowly lose heart.

In front of our real or imagined fears is a lack of trust. Not only are we afraid of germs and armed intruders, we are equally afraid of our neighbors. We don't really trust anyone. We have to keep a safe distancing attitude when we meet strangers. We assume people only show interest in us because they want something from us. Ours is definitely a "user-friendly" society, where those who learn how to use and manipulate the right people get away with it and get ahead.

We also "*lose heart*" because we lack confidence in ourselves, our abilities, our worth. We feel so small and insignificant compared to the global problems, the worldwide crises that are beamed into our living rooms 24/7. Our sense of purpose and desire to do something is stunted with "I-think-I-can't/I-think- I-can't" thinking. Without confidence to fill up our heart, it falls flat.

Paul knew the kinds of fears and disappointments, rejections and defeats his early Christian brothers and sisters were facing. He knew from personal experience the kind of heart disease that could develop from a steady diet of persecution, betrayal and failure. When Paul counsels his fellow Christians in his letters not to "*lose heart*," he does so knowing he has found the perfect protection--faith in Jesus Christ.

If Paul had trusted in the physical, the temporary things in life, he too would have lost heart.

Instead, Paul did not lose heart because at the center of his being, there was Christ. No matter what kind of fears or doubts attacked him in the physical world, the Christ within him was "*renewed day by day*" and grew ever stronger. In a sense, Paul considered the nature of this world somewhat of a "conditioning center" -- the "momentary afflictions" building him up in preparation for the "*eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.*"

We don't lose heart because in every instance where the world tells us it is time to give up, throw in the towel, forget it, lose heart -- the spirit of Christ within us takes hold and takes heart.

Do all of your long-range plans seem to be turning into short- range disaster?

Take heart: For "*it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry.*"
--2 Corinthians 4:1

Do things around you seem to be going from bad to worse?

Take heart: For "*our inner nature is being renewed day by day.*"
--2 Corinthians 4:16

Do you feel as if you have nothing to show for all your efforts?

Take heart: For "*we will reap at harvest-time.*"
--Galatians 6:9

Do you feel as if the weight of the world rests on your shoulders?

Take heart: For Christ "*endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.*"
--Hebrews 12:3

From anonymous on the internet:

Remember---"Things" in life don't just happen.

Faith makes things happen.

Prayer makes things happen.

Love makes things happen.

Hope makes things happen.

Take Heart!

Let us pray:

Eternal God, be our help; eternal God, sustain us; eternal God, be our answer when we call upon you. God of all being, be our help; searcher of hearts, sustain us; mighty redeemer, be our answer when we call upon you. Helper of the weak, be our help; redeemer and deliverer, sustain us; eternal rock, be our answer when we call upon you. Support of the innocent, be our help; mighty forever, sustain us; pure in your ways, be our answer when we call upon you. Amen.

--*The Gates of Prayer*