

PROMISES FOR THE WINDED (PART 2)

BY GUY HAMMOND

In our last devotional we discussed how all of us get discouraged, overwhelmed and think of quitting. We all go through times of being winded. I certainly have. I have felt drained, alone, afraid and wondering how much longer I could go on. It was General George Patton who said “fatigue makes cowards of us all.”¹ We also looked at how amazing it is to have the promise to the Lord’s presence. Here are two more promises from God to help us when we are winded.

The second promise for the winded is God’s protection.

God tells Paul in Acts 18:10 that no man would attack and harm him; not that he wouldn’t be hurt, but that he wouldn’t be harmed! They might have killed the apostle Paul, but not until he was able to say, “*I have finished my course.*” They killed Jesus, but not before He said, “*It is finished!*” The scriptures make it clear that we are here for a purpose. Paul was in Corinth and was told not to give up, to not get too winded yet, because there is too much to do. God was not about to let anything happen to Paul because there was so much more for him to accomplish.

Presently, you may be winded, but you can’t let that take you out of the game. You’ve got to catch your breath, and then get up and go again. It’s good to know that nothing can happen without the Lord’s permission. “*To live is Christ, to die is gain.*” Our attitude needs to be “God, take me when you’re thru with me, but until then, I’m going to serve you! With Paul, and with us, It’s simply too soon to quit!”

Remember the terrible situation Paul found himself in with these Christians in Corinth? If it wasn’t enough that the non-Christians and heathens were abusing him, mocking him, gossiping about him, the disciples were as well. Let me briefly say something about this.

In any organization on earth, where there is more than one person as a member, there will be times of miscommunication and even sin in those relationships. Why? Because we’re people, that’s why. This will occur on a sports team you play on, in the P.T.A., at your school, at your job, in your home, and yes, even in Jesus’ Church. As a same gender attracted Christian, you have no doubt had your feelings hurt by others in your church, most probably even someone in a leadership role, who has been incredibly insensitive or even rude in their comments on this topic. I understand, I have been on that end of a stinging jab many, many times. Let me remind you that you were converted to Jesus, not to people. You can never forget that you’re in Jesus’ Church, not the “People’s Church.” You can never give others so much power that it makes you want to quit Jesus’ church, no matter what they say or do!

Let me encourage you in this matter of dealing with others. Be careful what influences you allow in your life, even in the church. Those that have negative influences need to be forgiven, and prayed for, but you do not have to allow them to cause you to waver.

I am the one who determines who much influence any one person will have in my life, and on my emotions. There are some whom I give full power and authority, as commanded in scripture. As disciples who trust that God uses others to teach us and train us, we all need at least a few trusted, spiritual and confidential individuals with whom we say; “my life is an open book, here is the good, the bad and the ugly, please help me,” especially for Christians who have same gender attractions!

At the same time though, there are others who get limited power or none at all. And that is fine. I refuse to give people the power to bring me down with their problems or sin. As a minister, I am obliged to listen and care with everyone, but just because they are having a really bad day doesn’t mean that I’m going to have one with them. I know we weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh, but it doesn’t tell me that I have to get a bad attitude when they have a bad attitude, or be angry just because they are angry, or gossip and slander because they are gossiping and slandering, or get discouraged because they are discouraged. Refuse to give that much power to other people.

Let us all be kind and gentle with one another. Let us love one another. Let us forgive completely when we hurt each other. Let us never be rude to anyone. May we never slander or gossip about one another, even when someone does this to us first. May we hold no grudges, and may the community of believers of which you are a part, be a place of peace and love. May people look at you and know that you are a Christian, because of our love. If you can do that, all the while choosing carefully whom you will allow in, not giving power to those who could hurt you, then you'll be fine.

But through all of this, we do have God's protection. As it says in 2 Chronicles 16:9: *"For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."* And in Psalm 34:7: *"The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and He delivers them."*

The final Words of encouragement for the winded is to consider God's potential

In Acts 18:10b God tells Paul: *"I have many people in this city"*

The ancient city of Corinth was a city known for being the worst in the world for immorality and perversity. Corinth was Sin City! It had there a Temple for the Goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, and a thousand male and female prostitutes sold their bodies in the temple in the name of their religion! It's no wonder Paul felt discouraged upon arriving there. Can you imagine having to be on that original mission team? And yet God says *"do not be afraid; do not stop speaking, for I have many people in this city."* How could God say that? There were no than a handful of Christians there! God could say that because he wants to remind the winded, who have been discouraged of the enormity of the job of evangelism, the promise of His potential! God didn't see the perverts of this city for what they were, but for what they were going to be!

Years later, when Paul wrote a letter to the church that by then had grown to huge numbers, here's what happened: I Corinthians 6: 9: *"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*

Are you winded, especially by the challenges and temptations you face? I know, I've been there too. But God has a plan for your life and He isn't done with you yet. There are many people in your city and community that God wants to reach, and He wants to use you and your talents, gifts, and even your brokenness to help accomplish that. Isn't it incredible that in spite of our sinful lives, God still wants to use us for His good?

I know how difficult and discouraging our brokenness, struggles and temptations can be, when we fall over and over again, when it seems like our prayers aren't being answered in the time frame that we wish they would. I know how lonely the fight can be and how winded, tired and exhausted we can get. But let me encourage you to fight on.

A small monument made from a few stones marks the spot on Mount Washington in British Columbia, Canada where a young girl died on a bitterly cold night. Yet, her death was something that did not have to occur. It seems that she and her father had decided to climb that great mountain without hiring a guide. As darkness fell, and the biting cold sapped the last of their strength, they became discouraged and sat down on the trail. During the night the girl died from exposure and heart failure due to the cold. When the morning light dawned on that wind ravaged mountainside, her distraught father soon discovered that if they had walked just a few more feet they would have seen the lights of a cabin, a place where a warm fire would have warmed their bodies, a place where they would have been safe and protected from the cold and from the icy fingers of death. What prevented them from reaching that place of safety? Giving Up.

Christianity is a lot like the saying; *"I've been to the top, and I've been to the bottom, and I'll be at both places again."* We need to appreciate God's guiding love and protection when we are at both places in our journey.

We can't let our tiredness or struggles get the best of us. I've seen far too many people quit short of the goal because they were winded. Our problems are momentary. Our struggles will not last forever. When temptations are raging, or when we have sinned yet again, we must live our Christian lives with the heart and attitude of *"Even this shall pass away."* For when we are winded, when we are tired, when we feel like quitting, we must remember that if we can just hold on a little longer, the morning light will dawn and we will discover that we are truly just a few feet away from a place where there will be victory.

¹ Patton, George S. "The Quotations Page." 6 Oct. 2008 <<http://www.thequotationspage.com>>. Letter of Instruction Number 1, Third Army. War As I Knew It, 312

Thoughts presented in this devotional are taken from the book *MESSED UP: Proof That You're More to God Than Your Mistakes* by Guy Hammond and published by Illumination Publishers. The book is a companion to the documentary movie *FINDING GUY* by One Compass Media.

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