

Melva's Corner



ARE YOU EXPERIENCING BURNOUT?

Tapping the Source of Power

Central Truth: Perseverance and endurance are not enough!

Do you ever have a day when you just feel you are used up? Have you ever hit a time when you realize that there is just nothing more to give? These feelings have not been uncommon in any time; however, they appear especially prevalent in ours.

One of the current words used to describe that feeling is "burn out." In other times it was just called being spiritually exhausted, tired or weary. There are a myriad of camps and retreat centers which address nothing else.

Why do you suppose we have fallen prey to this particular malady so frequently today?

My best guess is that many of us who are Christians have lost sight of the real goal. Human beings often need to be able to have an end in sight if we are to retain our enthusiasm. The work of Christian service is never easy. It is sometimes filled with disappointment and hardship. Without a clear view of a finish line, the race becomes too difficult. The Apostle Paul could speak of finishing the race as he neared the end of his life because he knew where the finish line was. He had continued to run, in good times and in bad, because the goal was never in doubt.

Paul also knew how difficult the race could be. So the determined apostle also encouraged other runners with words like, "**But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good**" (II Thessalonians 3:13 NASB). He also encouraged the

Christians of Galatia with these words: **"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Galatians 6:9).**

Jesus spoke of being "weary and heavy-laden" with sin and teachings that exhausted and defeated them; He promised His followers relief and blessing (Matthew 11:28). Paul wrote to those who were worn out doing of good. We will reap in due time if we do not exit the race. The light at the end of the tunnel, the finish line, the reward for continuing, are all more than phrases to be quoted; they are also promises from God Himself. The writer of Hebrews continues this same encouragement with these words: **"For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:3).** Keep Jesus before you as an antidote against that weariness and the resultant hopelessness of forgetting your goal.

While looking to the finish and contemplating the reward is certainly motivating, we must never forget that the deeper motive of our "doing good." That cardinal motive of all good things must be love. The book of Revelation calls Christians to "perseverance and endurance." Jesus also reminds us in his message to the churches in the book of Revelation that perseverance and endurance are not enough. God's Son reminded the church in Ephesus of this truth:

"... you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent" (Revelation 2:3-5).

When we are motivated out of guilt, competitiveness, fear, or anger, we burn out more quickly and more completely. This is especially true when we feel like we didn't get the "big pay off" for doing what we did. We forget that such motivation is based on **our** power and **our** motives and not God's grace and power. Like Paul, we need to be compelled by the love of Christ — love for Christ and love like Christ's (II Corinthians 5:14). So "not losing heart" is an integral part of the journey; however, unless it is motivated by love, "it profits nothing" (I Corinthians 13:3).

Run the race with perseverance.

Run and do not lose heart.

Run in expectation of the finish.

Run always compelled by love!

I'm not sure where you are on your journey. I hope you have learned that quick fixes are nearly always wrong and that shortcuts to spirituality are nearly always Satan's traps. Instead, enjoy the journey. Speak openly to God about the matters of your heart. Look for the wide sweep of your story and remain faithful for the long haul. And when it is hard to find the words to express your joys, sorrows, reservations, frustrations, delights, praise, loneliness, confidence, and fear? Open the Psalms and let them help you pour your heart, in faith, to the God of the beginning, the end, and the journey.

We are in difficult times. Reports from around the world remind us of radical groups that attack Christians, burn church buildings, and even murder believers in the middle of the night. While a world wide problem, it is especially acute in Africa where people have been so open to the Gospel of Christ.

We have read reports of a missionary imprisoned for months on trumped up charges that could cost him his life.

At McClain Ministries, we are urging you to encourage your church leaders, your group Bible study, your Sunday school class and your friends to devote the next three months as a time of prayer for all believers everywhere who profess their faith under threat of harm. Pray for God's Word, grace and love to triumph over hatred, brutality and death. Many centuries ago the saying was born: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." While true, let's pray that the Gospel can triumph without the loss of life in our time.

Those of us who can freely declare our allegiance to God must give thanks and recognize that our blessings are given to us to bless others, especially those facing hardship because of their faith. Make a commitment personally to a specific nation where persecution now exists. Pray for it every day for the next three months. Learn all you can about that country. Pray for the political leaders, the missionaries, the ministers, the church

leaders, the Christians and their children by name. Ask God's power and grace to triumph through them even through these difficult times.

The book of Acts ends with Paul imprisoned. Yet the last word of Luke's story is the adverb "unhinderedly." Luke's point, not even persecution and the threat of death can hinder the liberating power of the Gospel. As Paul reminded Timothy (II Timothy 2:9), even though Christians may be imprisoned and in chains, "God's word is not chained!" Let's pray that His people will not be either!

Scriptural References:

"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Galatians 6:9).