A MESSAGE FOR REVIVAL

Don’t Lose Heart!

Please turn with me in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians the fourth chapter.

2 Corinthians 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION

A cowboy on the old western frontier came across an Indian lying flat with his ear to the ground.

The Indian said, “Wagon........four horses.......two passengers.......woman wearing calico dress.......heavy man driving wagon.......big hat.”

The cowboy said to the Indian, “That’s amazing! You can tell all that just by putting your ear to the ground?”

The Indian said, “No! Him run over me half hour ago!”

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Do you ever feel like that poor Indian? Do you ever feel as
though you have been “run over” by life? If so, you’re not alone!

I believe one of the greatest needs among Christians today is the need for “encouragement.”

*When a little baby first begins to walk, parents tend to encourage them every step of the way. The little baby delights in hearing mom or dad say, “Way to go” or “That’s a big boy” or “That’s a big girl.”

*That need for encouragement continues as the child grows older. When our kids get good grades on a test or on their report card, we mount it on the front of the refrigerator with magnets. And we’ll never know how much that encourages them!

*When they win awards in sports, we encourage them by putting their trophy on a shelf or by hanging their award ribbon where all can see.

And that need for encouragement never ceases! It follows us all through life.

*Go to visit someone in a hospital and you will likely see cards and flower or plant arrangements in the room sent to them by well-wishers to encourage them.

*Older people especially need to be encouraged. Older people often feel as though they have outlived their usefulness and they often wonder “why they are still here.” An encouraging word goes a long way with older folks!

I believe tonight some of you have come here needing some encouragement. Perhaps you are dealing with some serious health issues, or you’re under a lot of pressure at work, or maybe you’ve got some serious problems at home.

In tonight’s scripture text the apostle Paul encourages us with these words: “DO NOT LOSE HEART!”
In this fourth chapter of II Corinthians, Paul tells us three things we can do to keep from losing heart as we make our long and difficult journey to eternity.

First of all Paul encourages us to.........

I. Be COURAGEOUS In Your Battle (vs. 7-10)

II Corinthians 4:7-10 (NKJV)

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

ILLUSTRATION

The boxer returned to his corner after the first round of his bout. He slumped down on his stool, looked up at his trainer and said, "THROW IN THE TOWEL! I'M FINISHED! HE'S KILLING ME OUT THERE!"

The manager said, "WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN’ ABOUT BOY, YOUR OPPONENT HASN'T LAID A GLOVE ON YOU! NOW GET BACK OUT THERE AND FIGHT LIKE A MAN!"

As the boxer slowly arose from his stool he said to his manager, "WELL YOU KEEP YOUR EYE ON THAT REFEREE, BECAUSE SOMEBODY OUT THERE IS BEATING THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF ME!"

1. Paul makes it perfectly clear that our “battles” in this life aren’t imaginary! Christians and non-Christians alike have many battles! Our battles are very real!
2. But when it comes to our battles in life, we as Christians have one major advantage and that is we have the awesome power of GOD at work in us.

3. Brother or sister, you may be fighting a really tough battle right now, and you may be afraid of the outcome, but Paul says, “DO NOT LOSE HEART” because you have the power of God at work in you!

4. Paul says in verse 8. "We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed."

   What Paul is saying is “We have troubles coming at us from every direction, but we’re not demoralized!”

   ANALOGY: Maybe right now you feel like your life is like a dodge ball game and you are the target. Maybe you have health issues coming at you from one direction.......and financial issues coming at you from another direction.......and family issues coming at you from another direction. And maybe you’re thinking, if one of these doesn’t take me out, another one will.

   Do not lose heart brother! Do not lose heart sister! You have the power of God at work in you. You may be hard-pressed on every side, but you are NOT crushed!

5. Then Paul says “We are perplexed, but not in despair.”

   The Living Bible says it this way: “We are perplexed because we don’t know why things turn out like they do, but we don’t give up and quit!”

   THE MESSAGE says it like this: “We’re not sure what to do, but we know God knows what to do!”

   Brothers and sisters, we may not always understand why things happen to us. We may not always have the answers. But the important thing to remember is that we know the One
who does have all the answers. We know the One Who “works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. SO DON'T LOSE HEART!

6. Next Paul says, “We are persecuted, but not forsaken.”

Paul had many enemies! He was ridiculed, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, and abandoned by some friends. But one thing Paul was certain of was that God had NOT forsaken him.

Often when we fight our battles in life we have a sense of loneliness as though we have been abandoned by our friends and Church family, especially in a time of illness or the loss of a loved one.

But DON'T LOSE HEART, no matter how alone or isolated you may feel, there is one thing for sure, and that is GOD has not forsaken you!

7. Then Paul says, “We are struck down, but not destroyed.”

Perhaps Paul is referring to the time he was stoned at Lystra and drug out of the city and left for dead. The Bible tells us “the disciples gathered around him and Paul miraculously got up and went back into the city.

Brothers and sisters, sooner or later we will all suffer some kind of a terrible blow in life and we will feel as though we have been “struck down” and we'll never get back up again.

But DO NOT LOSE HEART! Not even death itself can keep a Christian down, because we have the resurrection power of Christ within us!

8. Christ Himself was hard-pressed on every side, yet not
crushed............He was perplexed, but not in
despair........He was persecuted, but not abandoned........He was
struck down, but not destroyed for He arose
victoriously
over death and is seated at the right hand of His
heavenly
Father!

9. Brothers and sisters, DO NOT LOSE HEART!
BE COURAGEOUS IN YOUR BATTLE!

Secondly, Paul encourages us to.

II. Be COMMITTED In Your Service (vs. 11-15)

II Corinthians 4:11-15 (NKJV)

11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake,
    that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is
    written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and
    therefore speak,

14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us
    up with Jesus, and will present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread
    through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the
    glory of God.

1. When you consider all the trials and troubles Paul faced,
    one would think he would have every right to “shut down”
    and think of himself. But he didn’t!

    In fact, the reason Paul didn’t lose heart was
    because he remained committed to serving
    others.
Paul wasn’t focused on all the ways others ought to be serving him, he was focused on all the ways he could serve others.

2. Paul was so unselfish in his service to others. He said, “Death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.”

In other words, “I may have to put up with some pain and some hurt and some hardships at times, but if it brings life to those I love, it’s worth every minute of it!

3. A school teacher may say, “I’m weary of teaching school” and feel like giving up, but then she will remember the students she loves, and continue teaching.

A nurse may say, “I’m tired of the long hours and the low pay and the demanding patients” and be ready to quit, but then she remembers her vow to serve others and keeps going.

4. As Christians, there will be many times when our burdens become so heavy and our troubles so great, that we’re ready to throw in the towel and drop out of the race.

Paul would say to us: DON’T LOSE HEART! There is something healing and therapeutic about serving others, even in the midst of your own suffering!

**BE COURAGEOUS IN THE BATTLE**
**BE COMMITTED IN YOUR SERVICE**

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Thirdly, Paul encourages us to .....
III. Be CENTERED On Your Eternal Home (vs. 16-18)

II Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1. Outwardly we are wasting away! Boy we don’t like to think of it in those blunt of terms, but its true isn’t it! Our bodies are wasting away!

   ILLUSTRATION: This past Monday I had to go to Kinston (NC) to pick up my new set of dentures. As I was walking to my truck, I looked heavenward and said, “Lord, I wish I still had the teeth You gave me."

   Dentures......hearing aids......eye glasses......hair coloring
   ............age spot remover.......and DEPENDS. All of these things remind us of the painful truth that “outwardly WE REALLY ARE “wasting away.”

2. The truth that “outwardly we are wasting away” might give us good reason to LOSE HEART were it not for an even greater truth: INWARDLY WE ARE BEING RENEWED DAY BY DAY.

   Brothers and sisters, we don’t quit because our focus
Isn’t on these outward bodies, our focus is on our inward spirit.

Long after these “outward physical bodies” wear out and are buried in the ground, our spirit will live on and on and on!

3. Knowing that our spirit will live forever, what does Paul tell us to do? He tells us “Not to fix our eyes on the things that are SEEN, but rather on the things that are UNSEEN.”

We think of this PHYSICAL WORLD as “the real world”........ the things we SEE and TOUCH. But this is THE UN-REAL WORLD. And we think of THE SPIRITUAL WORLD as “the unreal world”........the things we cannot see or touch. BUT THAT IS THE REAL WORLD! THAT IS THE WORLD THAT IS GOING TO LAST!

4. And so the way we keep from “losing heart” in this world is to BE CENTERED ON YOUR ETERNAL HOME!

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CONCLUSION

On a foggy July 4, 1952, Florence Chadwick tried to swim twenty one miles from Catalina Island to the coast of California. Millions watched on black and white TV as she made her brave attempt.

Her mother and trainer were in a boat on one side of her to cheer her on, while in another boat, men carrying weapons stood ready to shoot any sharks that might get near to Florence Chadwick.

Fifteen hours and fifty-five minutes into her swim, Florence Chadwick quit, just a half a mile from shore.

When they pulled her out of the water and into the boat, she said she didn’t quit because the water was cold, though it was. And she said she didn’t quit because she was tired, though she was. She said
she quit “because she just couldn’t see the shore. “

Three months later, on a clear day, Florence Chadwick tried again and this time she successfully swam the twenty one miles two hours faster than any man had ever done.

Brother or sister, if you came here tonight ready to “give up” ...........ready to “quit and throw in the towel” I pray that God’s Spirit has encouraged you through this message this evening to hang in there and press on!

**Be COURAGEOUS In Your BATTLE!**
**DON’T LOSE HEART!**

**Be COMMITTED In Your SERVICE!**
**DON’T LOSE HEART!**

**Be CENTERED On Your ETERNAL HOME!**
**DON’T LOSE HEART!**