

## “A New Heart” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 3 – June 9, 2024

- I. **2 Corinthians 4:16** – “So we do not lose heart.”
- II. **I saw an advertisement recently.**
  - a. A runner was leaning down on a sprinter’s block, and he had a prosthetic leg on one side with a “blade”, or a spring-like lower leg that allows running.
    - i. The ad said, “Lost leg, not heart.”
    - ii. Of course, I have no idea how he lost his leg, but he was not giving up.
    - iii. He might have spent years trying to save his leg... he might have been born without his leg... or maybe it was taken in an instant as he served his country in war.
    - iv. He didn’t give up and stop trying.
    - v. He didn’t let his disability discourage him to the point of quitting.
    - vi. He did not lose heart.
  - b. In our reading today, that’s what Paul says, “So we do not lose heart.”
    - i. No matter what kinds of challenges and trials we are facing...
      1. Whether our bodies are failing...
      2. Whether our mental and emotional state is in trouble...
      3. Whether we face challenges from the world around us...
      4. We don’t give up... we don’t lose hope... and we don’t lose heart.
- III. **Maybe Paul didn’t understand how difficult things can be in life.**
  - a. It’s pretty easy to say don’t lose heart, but it’s a whole different thing to stay hopeful and encouraged when life is terrible.
  - b. Some might even scoff when Paul says that whatever we are dealing with is a “slight momentary affliction.” (vs 17)
    - i. How can he call the troubles and trials we are going through slight?
    - ii. Sometimes these issues go on and on for years... so how can he call them momentary?
  - c. Just look at the world around us.
    - i. Every night we are updated on the war in Gaza and the terrible images... along with the war in Ukraine.
    - ii. This past year, tornadoes tore through houses and businesses all over the Midwest.
    - iii. Most of us are concerned about the heat waves that seem to just keep getting hotter and longer every year... especially when you don’t have air conditioning!
    - iv. The economy is a heavy burden on many of us with the price of food, utilities, and health care.
    - v. Society has become more divided over policing, politics, and gender issues.

- vi. I could keep going for a while because there is no shortage of trials around us at any given time.
- vii. It's also hard to see more people wanting to give up because of all this stress... sometimes people lose hope – and too many lose heart.
- d. All those things are in the world around us – and I haven't even talked about the things going on in our personal lives.
  - i. As I look out over this group, you all are not a bunch of “spring chickens”!
  - ii. We all begin to see our frailties and weaknesses as we get older.
    - 1. Whether it's hunting around for my reading glasses, or forgetting the names of people – I'm seeing my body change as I age.
  - iii. Then I think about how many of you have had struggles... we might have more artificial joints than real ones in our church today!
  - iv. Some of us are working through caring for loved ones with dementia or seeing the beginnings of it in our own lives.
  - v. Some of us are dealing with cancer and the whole process of fighting it into remission.
  - vi. Some of us have kids that are struggling with diseases, mental health issues, or addiction – and we feel the weight and burden of these weaknesses too.

IV. **So, how can Paul call these things slight and momentary?**

- a. How can Paul make these heavy burdens seem so trivial?
- b. What is driving him to say we don't lose heart... or give up... or give in?
- c. The answer comes right from Paul's heart.
  - i. In this letter, he opens up about his personal life to give the reader more understanding about how God works to make this strength of heart possible.
  - ii. He starts out in chapter one saying, “We were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death” (1:8–9).
    - 1. Consider that for a moment... “Utterly burdened,” “beyond our strength,” “the sentence of death.”
  - iii. In chapter 4, right before the words we heard today, he used words like “perplexed,” “struck down,” “afflicted,” “persecuted.”
    - 1. People ridiculed and mocked Paul.
    - 2. He was run out of town, beaten to within an inch of his life, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked and stranded, and even bitten by a venomous snake.
    - 3. He even knows that he will die before too long as a martyr for his faith in Jesus.
- d. Paul is very clear about the weight and burden of the world and his own body... so how does he not lose heart?

- i. He gets his power and strength from the resurrection.
  - ii. In fact, when you go back to chapter one again, he goes on to say, “We had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (1:9).
  - iii. And today in verses 13-14 he says, “We also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.” (vv 13b–14)
    - 1. Everything changed when Christ rose from the dead.
- e. Paul isn’t ignorant or without reason – he sees what’s going on around him, but he believes in Christ’s resurrection.
  - i. When he was the persecutor of Jesus, he went on the road to Damascus.
  - ii. Jesus blinds him and asks, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4)
  - iii. Saul asks, “Who are you?” and the answer... “I am Jesus.” ... and at that moment Saul dies and Paul comes forth.
  - iv. Paul was given a new heart, and it is not a heart of discouragement, fear, and resentment... but a heart of courage and hope.
  - v. From that point forward, Paul’s whole ministry flows out of Christ’s resurrection and leads him to say, “We do not lose heart.”

V. **We do not lose heart because we hope in a future glory.**

- a. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he talks about this in chapter eight, as he says that we will experience a super victory in Christ!
- b. On the day our Savior returns, we will rise with our bodies immortal and imperishable... and glorified.
- c. There will be no more tears, no more weakness and heartache, no more failing... no more grief and loss.
- d. Paul knows from his new heart that being in the presence of Jesus for eternity far outweighs our slight momentary affliction.
- e. That’s our heart too... with our hope firmly connected to the resurrection, we are able to weather any storm and not lose heart.
  - i. Remember when Paul connects the resurrection to our baptism in Romans 6? He says, “<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.” (Roman 6:3-5)
- f. Go from here with a new heart – a resurrection heart that hopes and has courage beyond the trials and tribulations of the world.
- g. Read your Bible daily, taking in the encouragement and peace it brings.
- h. Remember your Baptism that points to your eternal glory.

- i. Come to the Lord's Table often be strengthened to endure.
- j. Take heart, Jesus is really working in your life to restore and redeem you... and because our current struggles cannot be compared to our future glory...we do not lose heart. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sermon based on, "We Do Not Lose Heart," from Dr. Glenn A. Nielsen, Copyright © 2024 Concordia Publishing House  
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