

Stop Going Over The Edge

Dear Friend,

Life has a way of suddenly pushing us over the edge until we feel like screaming, ***“the cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow”*** (Ps 116:3). For me this going-over the edge can involve discovering people I trusted have betrayed me, or experiencing financial pressures that I feel I can no longer bare.

To stop from going over the edge in times of trouble it is critical that I do not throw away my confidence as Hebrews 10:35-36 points out ***“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.”***

Going over the edge in life may be the sudden loss of a job, a home, a loved one or anything that can destroy all hope for the future. *Chuck Swindoll* describes this going-over-the-edge as “anything that drains your tank of joy—something you cannot change, something you are not responsible for, something you are unable to control, something (or someone) that frightens and torments you, agitates you, keeps you awake when you should be asleep.”

When the bottom seems to be dropping out of life and we find ourselves going over the edge, God-talk disassociated from the tragic events at hand (the present reality) only makes the problem worse. It is not theories or talk that is needed, but an awakening to the fact that God is present in the most hopeless of circumstances and situations. For this reason Paul declared, ***“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms”*** (Eph.1:17-20).

Experiencing this power is what Eugene Peterson refers to as “the cultivation of wonders.” He points out in his book *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*. “No matter how much we travel throughout the creation, no matter how many pictures we take of its flowers and mountains, no matter how much knowledge we acquire, if we fail to cultivate wonder we risk missing the very heart of what is going on.”

Without this sense of wonder toward life, we will give up the will to go on living. It is the Holy Spirit who awakens this resurrection wonder within us. Disciples (followers of Christ) who are on the front lines of service will either find themselves burned out or giving up when life pushes them over the edge, unless the joy and wonder of life is awakened within them daily. Acts 13:52 states, ***“The disciples were continually filled with (controlled by) joy and with the Holy Spirit.”***

Whether it is cancer victims, homeless people, or anyone facing on-going daily “over the edge” problems, it is critical that the sense of wonder toward life is not lost. It is important that we are awakened to the wonders and treasures that exist even in the darkest events of life? Leslie D. Weatherhead refers to this as the “treasures of darkness” when he states “like all men, I love and prefer the sunny uplands of experience, when health, happiness, and success abound, but I have learned far more about God, life, and myself in the darkness of fear and failure than I have ever learned in the sunshine. There are such things as the treasures of darkness. The darkness, thank God, passes. But what one learns in the darkness, one possesses forever.”

I am certain there are times when we have all felt abandoned in the darkness and were not able to see the treasures that were being created. Noah must have felt abandoned as he worked year after year, building an ark without any sight of rain. I know Abraham must have felt that life had little wonder and no treasures as he waited for a promised son for 25 years. Hannah must have felt abandoned as she went to Shiloh, year after year, begging for a child. Paul felt alone with a thorn in the flesh as he pleaded with God for a physical healing that did not occur. Even Jesus Himself cried in Matt. 27:46, ***“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”***

How do we keep going in the midst of darkness and uncertainty as life pushes us over the edge? Direction for such steadfastness is given in Heb.12:2-3. ***“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”***

When we are pushed over the edge into the darkness, the tendency is to just want the healing, the deliverance, and the fulfillment of the promise. Yes, God heals, delivers and fulfills His promises, but he also ***“desires to give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better”*** (Eph.1:17). Such wisdom and revelation are the treasures that await us in the darkness.

As we receive our miracle, let us not miss the treasures that accompany such miraculous deliverance. The knowledge that these treasures are being developed during this season of trouble enable us to hope, ***“and hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us”*** (Romans 5:5). Noah, Abraham, Hannah, Paul and many others throughout the Scriptures show us how critical it is to not give up but to remain steadfast, knowing that God has not abandoned us and will bring forth His treasures at the designated “season” in our lives.

In Psalm 116, where we read earlier in verse 3, ***“the cords of death entangled me the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow,”*** the following assurance is found in verses 4-9. ***“Then I called on the name of the Lord: ‘O Lord, save me!’ The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simple hearted; when I was in great need, He saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”***

If circumstances are pushing you over the edge, remember you don’t have to give up. Instead you can stand firm and walk before the Lord in the land of the living. This is possible as you move from the fear of those circumstances, which are pushing you over the edge into the fear-of-the-Lord. This involves the daily discovering that the Lord God is gracious, righteous, and full of compassion and protects you in every situation.

Satan is determined to draw you away from God, mess up God’s will for your life, and get you to go over the edge and give up. We must never forget that ***“He (Jesus) who is in you is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world”*** (1 John 4:4).

It is critical that, in the midst of the attack, we stand firm because the victory has already been won through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore ***“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”*** (2 Cor.10:4-5).

Remember, if Satan can cause you to be defeated in a certain area of your life, he will set up a stronghold there. It is crucial that you bring those negative thoughts into the obedience and promises of Christ found throughout the Scriptures. If you do that you will be taking a major step towards standing firm and experiencing victorious living.

We must never forget that the Scriptures remind us to ***“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers (that also includes your sisters) throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering”*** (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Satan’s strategy is to get us so focused on what we don’t have, that we forget what we do have. Satan also wants us to forget the consequences of the actions that violate the directives of Scripture. Knowing that Satan chooses to attack when we are most vulnerable, we must be particularly alert when we are hungry, angry, lonely or tired. The first letter in each one of these words spells out the word halt. When you are under attack remember you must stand firm and ***H.A.L.T*** before making any major decision when we are experiencing ***h***unger, ***a***nger, ***l***oneliness or ***t***iredness.

You must be particularly on guard, knowing that Satan will try to get you to doubt the Word of God as he attempts to get you instead to debate its validity in your life and the situation you are facing. Never forget that Satan wants to destroy you as he works to breed dissatisfaction in your life, dividing you from the people who care about you, with the goal of drawing you away from God.

Ephesians 6:10-18 gives us step by step direction for surviving Satan’s attacks by standing firm and putting on the full armor of God. ***“God is strong and He wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best material. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we’ll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared. You’re up against far more than you can handle on you own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that, when it’s all over but the shouting you’ll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You’ll need them throughout your life. God’s Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other’s spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out”*** (The Message Bible).

We must remember when we feel like going over the edge that we are to stop and stand firm in the Lord and the power of His might. We are able to step and stand firm because of the supernatural power of God which is available to us through our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer and the reading of God's Word and the wonders of His creation under the anointing of the Holy Spirit awaken us to the reality of this power. The prayer-less Christian is a defeated Christian. Through the gift of prayer and the Scriptures, God awakens us to His power and warns us of Satan's attacks. That is why Paul says in 1 Thess. 5:17, ***"Pray without ceasing."*** Persevering prayer sends the devil running. Remember, ***"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man (and woman) avails much"*** (James 5:17).

"How we need to earnestly pray that those, so blinded by the god of this age (Satan) that they do not believe, will experience the truth and reality of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:3-5).

Now let's back up and take another look at how to survive a satanic attack by reading Eph.6:10-18; this time using the New International Version. ***"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."***

Remember in these verses we actually have three critical steps given to us for being victorious over Satan's attacks. First we must be able to identify the enemy. ***"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"*** (Eph. 6:12).

Second, in verses 13-17 of Ephesians 6, we are told to get dressed for battle and stand our ground when the day of evil comes. Paul is not saying *if* the day of evil comes, but *when*, for the battle is certain for every believer. As we further study what it means to be dressed for the enemy's attacks, I want to remind you that nowhere are we told to beat the devil. The reason is the battle has already been won through Jesus Christ. All we are called to do is stand firm in faith that the victory has been won by putting on the full armor.

Ephesians 6:14 tells us to have ***“the belt of truth buckled around us.”*** This means that as we stand firm in the reality of Christ’s victorious resurrection, we are to be wrapped in God’s truth which defeats Satan’s lies. We are also told in this verse to have the breastplate of righteousness in place. This means that we must desire to resist sin and have a life completely dedicated to God. This is possible because God’s righteousness is the breastplate that protects our hearts and ensures His approval as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As we dress for the victory which Christ provides, we are told in verse 15 ***“And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”*** We are able to stand firm with peace even in the midst of attack because we are rooted in the gospel (the good news) that our victory has already been provided for us.

As the attack rages, Satan is constantly shooting the flaming arrows of doubt, fear, anxiety and rage at us. Survival depends upon each of us using our shield of faith, which will enable us to see beyond the circumstances and know that the victory has already been provided through Jesus Christ. ***“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”*** (Eph. 6:16-17).

The entry point for Satan’s flaming arrows is the mind. The helmet of salvation protects our minds from doubting God’s love and saving work for us by assuring us of the fact that Jesus has provided the victory for us and will never leave us nor forsake us. As Satan attacks, the sword of the Word of God is absolutely essential because ***“Faith comes from hearing the message (of salvation), and the message is heard through the Word of Christ”*** (Romans 10:17).

The third step for experiencing the victorious life involves prayers with a bold testimony. That is why Paul directs us to be, ***“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this and with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints –and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel”*** (Eph.6:18-19).

This time instead of giving in and going over the edge why not stop and trust God. Let fear be gone as you boldly share in word and deed the victory that Jesus Christ has provided both now and for all eternity.

Yours in Christ,


Larry Rice