

Losing Heart

by Roger Shouse

2 Corinthians 4:16 *“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”*

Losing heart is the New Testament’s way of expressing discouragement. When a person’s heart is not into it, they simply go through the motions. Their effort is less than stellar. Someone whose heart is not in his work will find the day seems terribly long. His mind wanders and his boss fumes. When the heart has gone out of the marriage, a couple becomes room mates who simply share expenses and closet space, and very little else. I’ve seen folks whose heart were not into worshipping. They look so pitiful, it’s almost funny. They fidget, watch the clock, look bored and do everything but worship. Losing heart is a sad place to be. It’s hard to get it back sometimes.

Paul uses this expression, **“lose heart”** twice in this chapter (vv. 1, 16). In our verse, Paul is saying, even though we are aging and falling apart, we do not lose heart. We are not discouraged. The inner man, the soul of a person, is getting richer and better every day. Here is a couple of contrasts: *inside man* and *outside man*; *decaying* and *being renewed*.

Life can be discouraging, especially as you get older. As a person ages, he finds he can’t do what he once did. If he tries, he’s in bed for the next three days, hurting in his back, knees and ego. After so many miles the body needs work. Surgeries, medical tests, and pills are the regular routine for many senior citizens. And most hate it. You also find as you age, that society is geared toward youth. The older crowd is passed and pushed aside. I know the clock is ticking for me. Churches aren’t running over each other to hire old preachers. Such is life. But it’s enough to make one depressed and discouraged. Paul says to all this, **NO**. We do *not* lose heart. The reason: the inner man, our soul, is getting renewed day by day.

Renewed... means to *make new or fresh*. This is done through prayer, study of God’s word, hope and living with the Lord. Jesus is the difference here. A person doesn’t have to become an old grump, not while he is walking with Jesus. Years of prayer, experience and Bible knowledge has a way of making the spirit soar. I see that among older Christians. Younger people are running too fast through life. They are always going somewhere and never have time for anything. Their schedules are full and about all they can get are tiny bites of life here and there. Stressed and tired are lifestyles of younger people. I know, I’ve done it. Still am, even though I’ve passed through the land of being young already. Ever just notice folks coming into the church building? It is a sight to see. The older crowd is there early. They visit, catch up and have a sparkle about them. The young crowd squeezes in at the last second, coats, book bags, car seats, diaper bags, Bibles all being juggled and dropped as they hustle in. I have to sit down and catch my breath just watching them. Now I’m not thumping on anyone, just observing. Young children pull you thin. It’s hard to talk to anyone with the little ones tugging on your pant leg, interrupting every sentence you try to say. My only words are, hang in there. It’ll get better and you’ll be able to breathe some day.

Renewed in the inner man. Fresh. Inviting. Joyful. Christ-like. Not, grumpy, complaining, nor bitter. Jesus is the difference. When the outer man is decaying there is much to be worried about, complain about and lose heart about. But Paul said, **“we do not”** do that. It is a matter of choice. Pain is inevitable, misery is optional. You can’t control what will happen to you, but you can control how it will affect you. That is your choice. Some age gracefully, and others just get old. Some are a delight to be with, and some are a real pain. That renewed spirit is what Paul talked about in Romans 12 when he told the brethren not to be conformed to the world. Instead, they were to be renewed in the mind. Same thing here.

Can’t teach an old dog new tricks? That’s not how Paul saw things. *That’s just the way I’ve always been?* Paul thinks you can be better, every day. It takes some work and some thinking and a whole lot of walking with Jesus. The outer man doesn’t last anyway, it’s the inner man that matters. Some spend too much effort trying to renew the outer man. That won’t last. And the inner man, they just let it go into decay.

Renewal comes from working at it. Let’s do it.

--submitted
via Livingston Daily Devotional