Dear Friends,

I often reflect on the scripture passage from Isaiah. It reads, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and do not cast you off; do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (41:9-10)

Sometimes scripture that was written thousands of years ago can be as real, relevant and revitalizing today as it ever has been before.

Recently I found it helpful to remember a famous quote, “When you get to your wit’s end, you will find, God lives there.” I don’t know about you but too often I try to solve a situation on my own. I may come at a complex problem from several angles before I am reminded that prayer needs to be my first resource, not my last ditch plea.

Several years ago I had the opportunity to be in the presence of Mr Les Brown. He is an imposing African American. He has a gentle and warm spirit and his faith oozes from every pore. I was inspired while sitting in the audience when he said, “When life knocks you down, try to land on your back, because if you can look up you can get up.” What few people know is that at the peak of Mr Brown’s career his marriage suddenly ended. As many of us know, it doesn’t matter whose fault it is when a marriage ends. What does become painfully obvious is that there are two deeply hurt individuals. Les Brown found himself sleeping on a couch at his daughter’s house. It took him a few months to remember his own words and then he chose not only to look up, but to get up. Sometimes what looks like unbelievable success on the outside is not over-night success but a lifetime of dedication and commitment to one’s goals and objectives, even in the midst of painful experiences.

Charles Swindle once said, “Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.” Many times I have watched faithful believers tackle what seemed to be almost impossible circumstances and each one of them prayerfully decided to respond rather than react. They sought helpful council and they took the time to think and pray before making significant decisions about their future.

As you can well imagine, my faith is at the centre of my life. And although I don’t pretend to have it perfect, it is a day by day experience whereby prayer, scripture and the fellowship of those I trust and respect often result in tomorrow being a little better than today. An anonymous writer put it like this, “When you feel like you are drowning in life don’t worry, your lifeguard walks on water.” The trust is that many of us sometimes feel like we are treading water these days, so to know that Jesus is nearby, makes all the difference in the world.

Christine Caine described our situation in this way. She said, “Sometimes when you are in a dark place, you think you have been buried, but actually you have been planted.” I’m sure many of you remember the phrase, bloom where you are planted. Sometimes we just need to be reminded or rather encouraged, to keep growing.

If you are receiving this letter today and you have been having some serious doubts about your faith or your future, let me remind you of another anonymous author who said, “Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go…just remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won, and all the fears you have overcome.” I would add to this that sometimes we need someone to come along side of us and remind us of these moments and encourage us to keep going.

Finally, may I encourage you to surround yourself with people who see your value and remind you of it every day. I often try to remember a famous quote, “When the world says give up… hope whispers try it one more time.” May the God of whispers be with you this week.

Blessings

Stephen