

In the deep jungles of Africa, a traveler was making a long trek. Men had been engaged from a tribe to carry the loads. The first day they marched rapidly and went far. The traveler had high hopes of a speedy journey. But the second morning these jungle tribesmen refused to move. For some reason they just sat and rested. On inquiry as to the reason for this strange behavior, the traveler was informed that they had gone too fast the first day, and that they were now waiting for their souls to catch up with their bodies.

This rushing life which so many of us live does for us what that first march did for those poor jungle tribesman. The difference: they knew what they needed to restore life's balance; too often we do not.

All too often find ourselves worn out and exhausted and wondering where we will get the energy to take the next step. We become weary even in well doing, as the old phrase states. Words like fatigue, frustration, burn-out and stress can become common to our vocabulary.

The scripture found in second Corinthians gives us an insight into this all too common problem.

³ We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴ [a] We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵ We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NLT

"The world is unprincipled. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there! The world doesn't fight fair. But we don't live or fight our battles that way—never have and never will. The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ." 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5 The Message

We face a three-fold challenge. We must grapple with the world, our flesh and the devil.

The World: the value system and influence of those around us who think and act as if there were no God or Bible to guide us.

The Flesh: our physical and psychological needs. These needs push us to seek fulfillment outside the bounds of God's Word.

The Devil: Satan uses strategies to discourage and defeat us. He uses our weaknesses and exploits pressure and the allurements of the world as well as the strong desires of our flesh against us.

Because of the battle we all face everyday there are time when we need to review and check ourselves against the backdrop of reality.

How are you doing this morning?

How are you doing with the spiritual side of your life?

I ask that question to all of you. Even if you don't consider yourself to be a Christian or a follower of Christ.

All of us today regardless of our spiritual condition have an opportunity to look at our lives for a few moments.

The foundation for this sermon comes from the book, *Renewing Your Spiritual Passion*, by Gordon MacDonald.

Six symptoms of battle weariness

Drained

Everyone of us has experienced this feeling. When you have given and given to others and feel as though you have no more to give. This condition comes as a result of highly stressful encounters with problem solving, conflict or sadness. Sometimes a sense of loneliness accompanies this condition.

Sometimes this drained condition follows some great moment of personal victory.

There is a Bible story that illustrates this condition.

In the O.T. the prophet Elijah one day hit the bottom so to speak in his life. He was depressed. The irony of the situation is that he had just come off an incredible victory over the pagan priest of the false god Baal.

Elijah had challenged these false priests to a duel. An altar had been erected on the mountaintop. Two sacrificial bulls had been prepared. A large crowd had assembled. Reputations were at stake. Elijah stood alone while the false priests who had turned the hearts of the people away from God had a huge following and fan club.

It was pretty simple really. Elijah said to the priest you call on your God to consume the sacrifice by fire and I will call on my God. Whoever answers by fire will be declared to be the real God. All morning there had been the absurd scene of sincere grown men dancing, screaming cutting themselves in order to gain attention of the their god. Nothing worked. There was no response. This lasted all day.

Finally Elijah had a turn. He repaired the long-ignored altar of the Lord, put up the wood and sacrifice and then to add conviction and power to the whole deal he had the people pour water over the altar and sacrifice.

One man against an entire nation. The king and queen, several hundred priests and an entire crowd watching this whole situation.

Elijah prayed and the fire flew from heaven. The sacrifice was consumed, the altar of stones was consumed the water disappeared. It was a slam-dunk.

Elijah was euphoric. . . or was he. Right after this great victory the queen threatened his life and Elijah found himself in great depression. He was drained.

The Bible says he went a day's journey into the wilderness and asked the Lord that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now O Lord, take away my life. .:"

People in a drained condition:

- Feel caught up in feelings that often run counter to the facts.

- Experience strong self-doubt and negativism

- Become super critical of self and others.

- Mind dwells on the errors you have made and blots out the positive things that have happened.

- Puts you in a quitting mood.

But let me give you another one to think about...

Dried out

The person in this condition most often gets there by not taking time to renew their inner self. It would be better to say, you are taking time to renew the inner springs of your spiritual life. This is a real danger to the multi-gifted person who is constantly giving out but does not take the time for renewal.

Some of you are asking right now in your mind, Who has time to do that? If that was your first response you might do well to make some time for yourself and focus on your spiritual needs.

You cannot always run on empty. Eventually it is going to catch up to you and when it does it will affect more than just you.

Ever seen a car run out of gas during rush hour in the middle of a bridge? Traffic will back up for hours. Thousands of people are affected. Why? Because someone didn't take time to take care of refueling.

Listen to this very carefully. An empty spiritual tank can affect hundreds of people as well.

Dried out people are acting without heart

They are people who go through the motions of life with little love or time to really see others needs.

Sometimes these individuals are the hardest and busiest workers but they have not taken time to renew their spiritual life.

Even the great Biblical King David paid a high price for not paying attention to his dried out condition. Instead of engaging in renewing his spiritual life he was busy trying to find a way to secure the wife of another man. Torrid story that affected many people for generations.

When you hear of someone who does something really stupid and forfeits, sometimes what is a once in a lifetime opportunity, it is usually because of this condition.

Distorted

We are living in a world that often distorts the truth. This is one of the greatest challenges people face today. This means you have lost sight of what is of lasting value in life. Meeting deadlines, high performance, and making the proper impression have assumed larger proportions; and the things of a spiritual nature like spending time with God and your family are being neglected.

Biblical example would be Lot who in his desire to be financially successful became blinded to the dangers he was exposing his family to by moving to the city of Sodom. You can read about it in Gen. 13:10. He focused on the beauty of the country around Sodom and its financial possibilities. He succeeded financially but lost His family. His view was distorted.

Sometimes just the sheer volume of stuff we deal with on a daily basis can distort our view. Sometimes we feel like the boxer who slumps in his corner and squints through swollen eyes to try to make out what is happening in the rest of the world.

Missionaries often have this feeling when they come back to America after being out in the two-thirds world. (That's what used to be called the third world. The population and geography of the third world actually comprise two-thirds of the people and land mass.) Often in these countries one is fortunate to find food and when the missionaries return to the U.S. they are often overwhelmed at the choices we have in our modern supermarkets. We live in a distorted condition with a distorted view of the rest of the world.

Very seldom does it enter our minds to consider the big picture of the rest of the world and its conditions. We just keep on running like there is no tomorrow. We continue to consume and consume and wish we had more time and money to consume more things.

This is a distorted view that we must guard against.

We often live such blessed and pampered lives that when the realities of life come upon us we are devastated.

Clear your head.

Take a walk.

Break out the smelling salts.

Go visit a hospital someday. Sit in an emergency room waiting room and watch and listen to others as they share their story.

Do the research on poverty around the world. Stop whining.

It will change your perspective. It will clear your head.

We have come to expect that we will live from emotionally high peak to emotionally high peak and when it doesn't happen we think something is wrong. That is a distorted condition.

Devastated

Devastation will make you feel totally used up. Life or life's situations have hit you so hard that you feel weighted down and see no light at the end of the tunnel, unless it be the proverbial train coming the other direction. This is the condition that can come upon us when we've been fired or lost a job, a close loved one or perhaps experienced a failed marriage.

All of us pass through one or more of these kinds of situations. Some will fall apart; others will gather strength and discover passion within that they never knew was possible.

Don't sit and squander this opportunity. Let God stand up on your behalf and help you through the deep waters that threaten to flow over your head.

Wayne Alderson faced a devastating moment in his career in the steel industry. He had stepped into a volatile labor situation at Pittron Steel and had initiated a process of labor relations that was unprecedented. Within a short time, the working conditions at Pittron began to change, morale increased, and so did worker productivity. Alderson had begun to prove that you can treat employees with dignity and respect and, as a result, produce a working environment in which everyone wins.

Ironically, Alderson's contribution became his own downfall. Pittron became an attractive acquisition for a larger company and before long the Bucyrus-Erie Corporation consummated a deal to take over Pittron.

There was a dramatic meeting between Alderson, who was manager of the acquired company, and the man who was chairman of the acquiring company when Alderson was informed that his concept of labor relations was incompatible with Bucyrus-Erie's policies. He must abandon his relations with labor or get out. The choice was his.

Wayne's lips formed an answer. His mouth was open, ready to say yes but when it came out he said, "No sir, I will not give it up."

He was fired! Everything he had worked for was suddenly gone. He tried to imagine what it would be like to be unemployed. He was now a statistic, a casualty of the corporate wars. But he was not overcome with gloom. His spirits were lifted by the realization that the decision he had been so frightened to make was now behind him. The moment had come and gone. . .it had almost seemed easy. He was left to face the public reaction to his firing. His public image was crumbling. He was crushed with disappointment, but he felt no shame.

We must not be surprised when the devastating moments come, when all our support seems stripped away. We must find a way to renew our spiritual passion. This can be your moment for a great performance. You and God working it out.

Disillusioned

Disillusionment frequently results from the deflation of a great dream. You have invested a great deal of time, money and energy into a project or program, hoping that it will catch fire and really

do great. Instead the person you are hoping most to help fails to appreciate your efforts. This can be painful and cause you to withdraw and determine to never get involved again.

Disillusion come at the death of a dream.

What do you do now?

What step can you possibly take?

How in the world do you recover from the death of a dream?

Moses is a perfect Biblical illustration. At the age of 40 he became aware of the oppressed condition of his people in Egypt and began to dream about their liberation. One day he saw an Egyptian fighting with a Hebrew. In a moment of outrage he stepped into the fight and like a would be hero killed the Egyptian buried him.

Did Moses assume he would be a hero with his people? If he did he was disillusioned because the next day when he attempted to step in between two Hebrews who were fighting and they utterly rejected him. He was so disillusioned and afraid that he fled to the desert. It took forty years for him to regain his passion and fight again.

Our spiritual passion can be jeopardized when dreams and visions are dashed.

Defeated

Who among us has not felt the weariness that comes from the crushing blows of defeat?

Who does not know the taste of failure?

You suddenly feel unable to live up to the set of standards of faith.

The worst kind of wound is to do something which causes spiritual failure.

The disciple Peter is our best example.

Listen to his words to Jesus just hours before his trial and death, "I'm ready to go to prison with you and to die with you."

Later he couldn't even stay awake to pray with Jesus in the garden.

Within hours he was a failure who denied even know Jesus in the face of public accusations.

He messed up. He did the opposite of what he thought he would do.

When Jesus turned and looked at him he went out and wept bitterly.

Have you failed to live up to your promise to God, to others and to yourself?

Are you living a life that is plagued by the feelings that come with being beaten up by the system?

Are you today miserable and sensing defeat in your life because of the circumstances that surround you?

The writer of the book of Corinthians gives us an insight into the answer for our dilemma.

I want you to think about this for a few moments before we go today. I want you to think about whatever it is that has you defeated, disillusioned, devastated, distorted, dried out or drained. And now I want you to think about this verse that says,

“ . . . fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity. ”

Think about it what it would mean in your life to have the power of Jesus Christ helping you to build your life into a structure shaped by Him.

Before you can build or even rebuild you have to clear the ground of every obstruction. I want you to watch and listen for just a few minutes.

The wicked build houses as fragile as a spider’s web, as flimsy as a shelter made of branches.
Job 27:17-19 NLT

³ *But Jesus deserves far more glory than Moses, just as a person who builds a house deserves more praise than the house itself.* ⁴ *For every house has a builder, but the one who built everything is God.* Hebrews 3:3-4 NLT

“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’

²⁴⁻²⁵ *“These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.*

²⁶⁻²⁷ *“But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don’t work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.”* Matthew 7:21-27 The Message Bible

The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.
Psalm 118:21-23 NLT