

2 Arrows to Combat a Discouraged Heart

Bart Starr was a great quarterback for the pro football champion Green Bay Packers. When his son, Bart Jr., brought home schoolwork that was well done or a report card with good grades, Bart Starr would tape a dime to the corner as a reward and write next to it, "Good work ... I believe in you!"

Then the day came when Bart Sr. had a terrible game against a leading opponent. It was one of his all-time worst performances. When he got home from the game that night, he found a note from Bart Jr. with a dime taped to the corner. It simply read, "Dad, I believe in you."

In Psalm 127, this eighth of 15 psalms of ascent, we are midway on the climb up to Jerusalem. Your geographical location today may be different from the psalmist's; but if you have been journeying upward for some time out of a deep personal valley, you may just want to lie down and quit. You've gone too far to turn around and go back, but you don't think you have the stamina to make it the rest of the way. You won't survive unless help comes from outside yourself.

Who is going to put a note on your heart that says, "I believe in you"?

Help From Above

The opening verses of this psalm refer to the occupations of builder, watchman and general laborer. They describe you.

With great effort and skill, you seek to build a life of value. With keen sensitivity to dangers lurking in the distance and the dark, you remain alert. With diligence and long hours, you work hard to make a living. But will you succeed?

Halfway up the trail you honestly don't know. Will there ever be a time when you feel secure and sleep a good night's rest?

I am reminded of the man who sold his property to a developer. After the transfer of title, the new owner showed up with bulldozers, a crane and wrecking ball. "What are you doing?" asked the former owner. "I thought you wanted this."

"Oh," the new owner replied, "I didn't want the buildings, just the land. I'm going to put up something better."

Have you reconciled yourself to the idea that what you wanted built on your life may not come to pass? In fact, what you tried to build may have been demolished by events you had no control over. The important thing is that you are still here even though what you tried to create is not. As an empty lot, you may have trouble envisioning the beauty that God will yet place on the property called your life.

This psalm tells you three vital truths about God's personal care:

- He builds your life.
- He watches over you.
- He provides for you.

The encouragement in these first two verses is for you to avoid thinking and acting as though everything depended on you. It doesn't. The Lord is helping you.

Help From Alongside

Even though the Lord loves you, you can still feel very alone and isolated. God knew that when He said of the first human that loneliness was not good.

Pilgrims to Jerusalem traveled together. We get a glimpse of this family event and group travel in the story of Jesus' visit with His parents to Jerusalem at the age of 12 (Luke 2:41-51). The trip gave opportunity for a father to reflect on

the blessings of his children as they scampered about him on the journey.

Perhaps you do not have sons or daughters, or your children have not been your “arrows”—weapons useful against the discouragements of the outside world. Maybe your kids have become more like daggers aimed against your own soul.

How do you apply verses like this when you’re childless or your children are distanced from you? Lift your eyes off the word “sons” or “children” and substitute the word “friends” or “family.”

The Christian life was not meant to be lived alone. You need the companionship, encouragement and support of others.

Just as Bart Starr’s son said, “I believe in you,” so family and friends are weapons (“arrows”) helping us defeat discouragement and difficulty. The more “arrows,” the better.

George O. Wood *is the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God. For the original article, visit .*