

Dutch Sheets: Your Healing Is Within Reach

Several years ago, my brother was allowed to witness an open-heart surgery. During the procedure, the patient's heart had been stopped from beating. When it came time to restart it, despite repeated attempts, the medical staff was unable to cause the heart to beat again. Finally, although the patient was obviously unconscious, the surgeon leaned over and spoke into the patient's ear, "We need your help. We cannot get your heart restarted. Tell your heart to start beating." Incredibly, in that instant, the patient's heart began to beat again!

Proverbs 13:12 tells us, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." But the diagnosis can change! God has promised healing to the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18). There is a crisis point, however—one we all reach—in the process of healing from hope deferred: choosing to embrace the healing process. Hope—and healing—is a choice that must be made.

As you probably know too well, experiencing hope deferred does not require a choice—pain and disappointment are facts of life. Healing, however, does require a choice. Making the simple but powerful choice to hope again is the first step toward healing.

Wilma Rudolph, three-time gold medalist in the 1960 Olympics and once known in the field of running as the world's fastest woman, said, "The doctors told me I would never walk again. My mother told me I would. I believed my mother."

Born prematurely into a very poor family and the 20th of 22 children, Wilma was not permitted to receive care at the local white hospital. For the next several years, her mother took her once a week for two years to the nearest medical facility

that would treat her—a 90-mile round trip. Wilma Rudolph's life is an amazing story of achievement against the odds—but the story began with the right choices.

Like the Olympic champion and her mother, you will have to choose the power of hope. I realize this puts some of the responsibility for healing on you, but it is also an incredibly liberating truth. Healing—freedom from hope deferred—is a choice that can be made.

Scripture is filled with promises that you have this power to choose life over death. The Lord actually told the Israelites to “choose life” (Deut. 30:19). You don't have the luxury of choosing never to have challenges, but you do get to choose how you respond.

People sometimes refer to their difficult times as winter seasons. There is a beautiful picture associated with this in Ezekiel 47. The prophet Ezekiel was given a vision of the river of God. In this vision, the river produced life and healing everywhere it went. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for *river* in the passage is *nachal*, and means “a stream, especially a winter torrent.” Some streams and rivers are dry during certain times of the year. They fill up, however, when there is rain, or, as in this case, when the spring thaw melts the snow and ice on the mountains. Tiny rivulets develop, coming together to form streams and, eventually, becoming *nachalim* (rivers). Though Ezekiel's winter river began as a trickle in verse 1, it eventually became a mighty unfordable river by verse 5.

As your winter season changes to spring, God's healing will likely begin as a mere trickle. Keep choosing life! You can be confident that the river will deepen and that God will use the snow and ice of your spiritual winter to bring a deep flow of His Spirit to you.

For those who are confused and disillusioned, for the heart

grieving from pain and loss, for the faithful but weary soldier whose stream-bed is dry, for those who have lost their first love connection to God, for the Gideons of the world who are heartsick with hope deferred ... your season is changing. The warmth of spring is going to do its work, and summer is coming.

Thank God winter doesn't last forever. The river of healing will flow to you, and you will drink its healing power. Hope deferred will end. Tell your heart to beat again!

Dutch Sheets is an internationally recognized teacher, conference speaker and author of *The Power of Hope*. He has written more than 20 books, translated into over 30 languages. His first work, *Intercessory Prayer*, sold nearly a million copies and is being used to empower believers worldwide for passionate prayer and societal transformation. He and his wife, Ceci, make their home in the Dallas area.