

Looking to the Future

It's day 53 of the "lockdown." Ugh! Stir crazy turns to cabin fever and cabin fever becomes cubical fallout! The home you love feels a bit like a cubical office and that white picket fence around your yard now your prison boundaries!

Okay, maybe it's not quite that bad, but for some it's starting to feel like it. The present parameters bring up a valid question, "How can we keep our sense of well-being and our love of liberty alive while we languish in our homes?" It's not a new question. How could the early Christians keep joy in their hearts when the Roman government kept them oppressed? How could Paul keep his head on straight when he wrestled with rats in a Roman dungeon? (By the way, he wrote four of our New Testament epistles while in prison in Rome.) How could Joseph keep his cool when he was in prison on false testimony?

The answer, for them and for us, is to both focus on others and focus on our future. Paul refers to this mental/spiritual process in Philippians 4:12-14:

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Focus on the future. Whether running the Boston Marathon, or the blustery marathon of life, we look to the future. The Hebrew writer reminds of this very process in the mind of Christ in Hebrews 12:1-3:

...lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Growing weary? Fix your eyes on Jesus. Losing heart? Run with endurance and remember Jesus "so that you may not grow weary and lose heart."

Every stage of life has its challenges. Every challenge calls for our individual and unique response. Every response should be based on a deep and abiding desire to simply be like Jesus, to "...walk in His steps," 1 Peter 2:21. Just as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."

One challenge I have learned to give myself in challenging times is to sing this song, "To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask to be like Him. All through life's journey, from earth to glory, all I ask, to be like Him.

Keep on keepin' on - in Him!

Ray Wallace