



Links Players

Suffering - Sustained Through Suffering

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.... (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, ESV)

You find yourself in the match-play championship at your club. You are “jacked.” You reel off four straight pars in the opening match only to realize you are four down. Your opponent has his foot on the pedal and shows no signs of backing off. You knock it to three feet on number five, only to have him chip it in from off the green. Then you miss it! Five down!

It’s “gut check” time! At this pivotal moment, you have to find another gear. Somewhere, somehow, you must discover a deeper resolve. The unspoken question ringing in your ears is, “Will I lose heart?”

What will you do? “Fold like a paper napkin?” “Tuck tail and run?” “Throw in the towel?” “C’mon,” you think to yourself—“let’s stay in this thing; it’s not over till the ‘fat lady sings.’”

“Losing heart” in competition is a sad state of affairs. How many magical moments have we enjoyed watching someone “come from behind” to win an improbable victory?

Since we are on the eve of the 2023 Ryder Cup, it makes sense to reference the “Battle of Brookline.” In 1999, the USA-Squad, captained by Ben Crenshaw, found themselves down 10-6 after two days “of uninspired play,” as Golf Digest scripted it.

Then, what might rival a Knute Rockne speech, Crenshaw passionately delivered one “for the ages.” George W. Bush would later say, “Who knew what would happen? One man did: Ben Crenshaw. He never lost faith.”

Losing our hearts in competition is bad enough; losing our hearts in the battle of life is inexpressibly sad. No one goes through life unscathed. No one! What we do in those moments is crucially important.

We all, at times, face insurmountable obstacles: bankruptcy in the 2008 debacle, a spouse of many decades dying, a career trajectory

plummeting, childhood dreams vanishing, unexpected betrayals by close friends, unachieved goals never realized—the list is endless!

What do you do? Where do you find the strength to go forward? Where do you look for comfort and courage? Where do you turn for motivation to rise again?

Like Rocky Balboa on the mat, bloodied and weary, where do we get our “second wind?” We don’t have Mickey standing over us shouting, “Get up...cause Mickey loves ya,” we have King Jesus standing over us saying, “I am with you!... I am your strength!... I am breathing new life into you!... Get up; I am not finished with you! We have work to do!”

Jesus has not only spoken (past tense) to us but is daily speaking (present tense) to us via his Word and Spirit. Hear him today and be inspired! Even though you are seemingly “down for the count,” rise and trust the outcome of his promises that, though unseen, will be realized by faith.

Prayer: Jesus! Please give us the courage to go forward!

READING - 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

1. Reminisce among yourselves regarding those moments when you were “up against it” in a round or tournament and found a way to overcome.

2. In this chapter, Paul is “up against it.” Where does he turn to find the needed strength to press on? List and discuss the various ways Paul finds strength to endure.

3. This might be a great time to discuss the tough spot various Links members find themselves in; that is, for those who have survived a previous battle to encourage others who are in a “dark night of the soul.”
