

You're Not, You Don't, You Can't and You Won't

I) Intro

Staying motivated and staying positive isn't always automatic. Circumstances can chip away at your emotional foundation to the point where, whether you're aware of it or not, you begin rehearsing all the things that aren't going the way you feel they should and the end result can be crippling.

Sometimes it's nothing more than a series of trivial events, other times it's a dramatic occurrence, but either way, the resulting weight that's placed upon your emotional shoulders wears you out and you find yourself on your knees.

Being on your knees isn't a bad thing. It's there when you're more apt to call on your Heavenly Father and receive from Him not only what you need, but also what He wants you to have. Maybe He was using those circumstances to get your attention.

But rather than immediately dismiss your situation as a collection of Divine sticky notes, step back for a moment and try to look at your scenario from a third person's perspective. There may be more to why you're feeling the way that you do that's worth examining.

Many times when you're feeling low, the cause can be traced back to those statements that have been echoing in your head as a result of the thing or things that have been going wrong. You've been allowing yourself to be convinced that you're not, you don't, you can't and you won't.

You're not who and what you think you should be. That's the first negative and the one that tends to be the most overwhelming because it's not always something that you can quickly fix.

You don't measure up. There's a standard out there that you're comparing yourself to and you're coming up short and it's defeating.

You can't change what's happening. No matter what you do or how hard you try, you can't alter your situation and that's a difficult thing to contend with as well.

You won't. It's like you're hearing the final impact of the judge's gavel. Your situation will never change so get accustomed to it – at least that's what you hear yourself saying.

As easy as it is to slip into this kind of mindset, it can be just as easy to pull yourself out, but it is a choice and it does require some Divine Intervention, at least as far as recalling a little bit of God's Truth.

II) You Are

You are God's workmanship. Put aside your situation for a moment and just reflect on the fact that God created you and before you rush off to insist that you're nothing special, you need to recall that God made you and He's got a Purpose for you and to mentally walk away from all that is like refusing the keys to a brand new car so you can continue riding your bike. You are something special. That's not "positive thinking," that's reality. Drink that in for a minute. (Ps 139:13; Eph 2:10)

III) You Do

You don't measure up. Is that what you think? Well, nobody does. At least from the standpoint that regardless of how qualified or gifted a person may be, there is, and always will be, something out there that's just beyond their grasp. That's not your cue to give up or whine, rather it's your cue to remember that its God working through you that makes all the difference.

Every significant personality in Scripture made a point of directing all of the accolades that they would've otherwise accepted back to God. And that's not because they felt like it was the polite thing to do, it was the only reasonable course of action because they knew that behind every earthly qualification and behind every human virtue was the Power of their Heavenly Father and it was that Strength working through them that resulted in the extraordinary thing that was being applauded (Ex 15:11; Phil 2:13; Col 1:29). And it's because God is working in and through you that you do qualify, **you do** measure up. Not because of who you are, but because of who it is that's animating His Purposes through you.

IV) You Can

And maybe you can't change what's happening, but **you can** change the way that you respond to it. You've probably heard that before, but it's more than just a psychological pacifier, it's the Word of God. Philippians 4:8 says to think about **good things**. Romans 8:28 says that all those that are doing their best to remain consistent with what God would have them do can expect **good things** to come out of whatever they're contending with. First Thessalonians 5:16-18 says to be joyful always and to give thanks in **all things** (see also Ps 43:5).

Being joyful is being optimistic, being positive. Being happy is ultimately based on circumstances but being joyful is a state of mind that, in the case of the believer, is based on Who God is and the fact that He can be trusted. So instead of a scenario where your disposition is dictated by a constantly fluctuating set of circumstances (a.k.a. life), your outlook is founded on the unchanging Presence and Power of God.

V) You Will

You will get past this, whatever "this" is. It could be something very difficult that takes the wind out of your sails and makes it hard to smile. Or, it could be a situation where everything is lining up exactly the way that you want it to and you can't imagine life being any better.

A) Challenges

If you're feeling terrible, remember that mourning turns into dancing. That comes out of Psalm 30:5. John 16:33 says that we're going to run into problems but to be positive about things because God's in charge and He's overcome any and all forms of adversity. This will pass.

B) Triumphs

When you're feeling great, good! The Bible doesn't ever seek to squelch a sunny disposition, but it does speak to the issue of pride. In James 4:13-16 it says that rather than boast about how you're going to do

this and that, bear in mind that ultimately your life is a mist. For you to be boasting about anything is foolish in that its God Who determines what happens and what you're going to be able to do.

There's a line from the movie "Patton" that goes like this:

"For over a thousand years Roman conquerors returning from the wars enjoyed the honor of triumph, a tumultuous parade. In the procession came trumpeteers, musicians and strange animals from conquered territories, together with carts laden with treasure and captured armaments. The conquerors rode in a triumphal chariot, the dazed prisoners walking in chains before him. Sometimes his children robed in white stood with him in the chariot or rode the trace horses. A slave stood behind the conqueror holding a golden crown and whispering in his ear a warning: that all glory is fleeting." (from the 1970 movie "Patton" starring George C. Scott, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner and written by Francis Ford Coppola and Edmund H. North)

"Glory" can be manifested in the context of monetary resources, influence, accolades and power. In each instance, you have the reality of impermanence. Take a look:

Resources / Riches: Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. (Prov 23:5 [see also Matt 6:19])

Power / Influence: For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. (Jas 1:11 [see also Prov 27:23-24; Ecc 2:16; 5:10; 9:15])

Matthew Henry offers some great commentary that helps the reader fully understand the scope and meaning of this verse:

As a flower fades before the heat of the scorching sun, so shall the rich man fade away in his ways. His projects, counsels, and managements for this world, are called his ways; in these he shall fade away. For this reason let him that is rich rejoice, not so much in the providence of God, that makes him rich, as in the grace of God, that makes and keeps him humble; and in those trials and exercises that teach him to seek his felicity in and from God, and not from these perishing enjoyments.
(Matthew Henry Commentary on James 1:11)

Accolades: Regardless of the number of times God delivered Israel and revealed Himself as being nothing short of amazing, it was inevitable that, in time, the Hebrews would forget what He had done and Who He was. And it wasn't due to the fact that their memories were dull, as much as it was that their hearts were fickle (Dt 31:21; John 2:25). So if human beings can forget or somehow minimize the supernatural things that God does, imagine how much easier it is to do the same thing with human accomplishments. That is why whatever is extraordinary today will be ordinary tomorrow and forgotten by the weekend.

That isn't to say that you don't celebrate the good things that occur in your life or graciously accept the applause of others. The point is that you want to become prideful and start giving yourself the credit that rightfully belongs to God. Go back and pop open the hood of James 4:13-16 and ponder the implications of those verses:

Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”¹⁶ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. (Jas 4:13-16)

Fact is, however prepared or skilled you may be, however foolproof your agenda may appear, the number of variables that cannot be anticipated or controlled are innumerable. Again, Matthew Henry sums up this Truth really well:

How vain a thing it is to look for any thing good in futurity, without the concurrence of Providence. We will go to such a city (say they), perhaps to Antioch, or Damascus, or Alexandria, which were then the great places for traffic; but how could they be sure, when they set out, that they should reach any of these cities? Something might possibly stop their way, or call them elsewhere, or cut the thread of life. Many who have set out on a journey have gone to their long home, and never reached their journey’s end. But, suppose they should reach the city they designed, how did they know they should continue there? Something might happen to send them back, or to call them thence, and to shorten their stay. Or suppose they should stay the full time they proposed, yet they could not be certain that they should buy and sell there; perhaps they might lie sick there, or they might not meet with those to trade with them that they expected. Yea, suppose they should go to that city, and continue there a year, and should buy and sell, yet they might not get gain; getting of gain in this world is at best but an uncertain thing, and they might probably make more losing bargains than gainful ones. And then, as to all these particulars, the frailty, shortness, and uncertainty of life, ought to check the vanity and presumptuous confidence of such projectors for futurity: “What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”, (Matthew Henry Commentary on Jas 4:13-16)

It is the Providence of God that is to be credited for whatever it is you’re able to accomplish. That’s not just a polite nod of the head to “the Man upstairs.” That’s a legitimate acknowledgement of the Reality that characterizes everything that we do. Even the skill that’s necessary to accomplish said task is something that comes from God (refer to Ex 35:30-35 to see the Source of craftsmen Bezalel’s and Oholiab’s [pronounced *BEH-zah-lehl* and *oh-HO-lih-ab*] skill to not only design things but also to teach others). So if both the skill and the opportunity needed to successfully complete the endeavor you’re now being applauded for came from God, then to take credit for it is not only inappropriate, it can be downright unhealthy (see Acts 13:21-23).

C) The Priority of Forever

In addition to the Biblical admonishment to maintain a humble and reverent posture when acknowledging the affirmation of others, you also want to always base your perspective on those things that are eternal. The moment you start building your sense of self on those things that can and will change, you’re digging a hole that may or may not be apparent until you’ve dug so deep that you’re prone to despair when your foundation is revealed as the house of cards that it is.

The only things that last are those things that resonate through all eternity, namely :

The Word of God – 1 Pet 1:25

The Love of God – Psalm 100:5

The Throne of God – Psalm 45:6

The Actions of God – Ecc 3:14

**The Kingdom of God – 2 Sam 7:16;
Daniel 2:44**

The Name of God – Psalm 72:17

The Glory of God – Psalm 104:31

The souls of men – Rev 21:1-4, 8

In short, the only enterprise that's going to endure is the realm of the eternal. That's why Scripture is so prolific in the way it constantly reinforces the priority of that which lasts forever.

Take a look:

¹⁹ **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matt 6:19-20)**

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor 4:18)

¹⁷ **Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.
(1 Tim 6:17-19 [see also Ps 33:11; 37:18; 92:6-8; 100:5; 112:1, 3])**

So all that to say that **you will** get past this - whatever “this” is. Whether it's a major a victory or an emotionally crushing loss, you will move on provided you base your perspective on those things that will endure beyond this life.

VI) Conclusion- Focus on What You Can't See

Faith. By definition, faith means that you're basing your actions as well as your perspective on that which you cannot see (Heb 11:1). The fact that something's not visible, does not mean it's imaginary or powerless.

In 2 Kings, chapter six, you learn how Elisha was able to discern the movements of King Aram's army and warn the king of Israel to steer clear of those areas. After several failed attempts on the part of King Aram to ambush the Israelites, King Aram surrounded the city of Dothan where Elisha was staying - intent on killing the man of God.

Elisha's servant was understandably concerned given the size of the army and the certain destruction that loomed in the very near future. But Elisha was calm because he knew the substance of the army that was fighting for him and protected the city.

It wasn't an army that you could see, however. So in order to reassure his servant, he prayed:

And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17)

Ephesians 6:12 describes the environment we contend with every day as being one that is spiritual in nature. However the things that cause us duress appear, they are manifestations of this "dark world" and the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

At first brush, one might want to discount that kind of assessment as one that is coming from a perspective tainted by too much time in front of the TV. But while it might sound like "Dungeons and Dragons," it's real.

Think about it. Can you put fear in a box? Can you bottle defeat? Can you package anger? No. These are things you feel – they are spiritual commodities. You can't see them apart from the way those dynamics manifest themselves in the context of outward behaviors. But while you can't see them, you can take your stand against them and prevent them from causing you to make unhealthy compromises. In other words, you can avoid allowing negative thoughts to cause you to sin.

But you do that by equipping yourself with the armor of God. You don't merely think "happy thoughts." You focus on the Truths Authored by God that apply to your situation and let those Realities overwhelm the way in which you would otherwise process things.

So the next time you're inclined to think "I'm not, I don't, I can't and I won't," meditate on the Truth that applies and you'll find that you can, you are, you do and you will.