



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

August 12, 2021

DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

"... but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength."

(Isaiah 40:31)

Did You Know?

- We learned before that some important parts of **Proverbs** were compiled and edited 715-686 BC, at the time of king Hezekiah. Perhaps it was also at this time that the sayings of Agur (Ch. 30) and Lemuel (Ch. 31:1-9) and the other "*sayings of the wise*" (22:17 – 24:34) were added to the Solomonic collection. (The NIV Study Bible)
- The Hebrew word translated "*proverb*" is also translated "message" (Numbers 23:7), "taunt" (Isaiah 14:4) and "parable" (Ezekiel 17:2), so its meaning is considerable broader than the English term. (The NIV Study Bible).
- Since the proverbs were written primarily for instruction, they are often given in the form of commands: "**Do not lurk like a thief near the house of the righteous**" (Proverbs 24:15) Even where the imperative form is not used, the desired action is quite clear. E.g.: "**An honest witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies.**" (Proverbs 14:5) (The NIV Study Bible)

Personal Insight

Some of us can handle failure better than others. How is it with you? I am still in the learning curve on how to process when I don't 'perform' according to my expectations.

Yesterday, I participated in an online webinar organized by the Worship Design Studio. The leader and founder of this program encouraged us to take a *deep breath*, acknowledging that we are in the "goo" of a time of transformation and transition. We don't have all the answers. "Perfect is cancelled" in these days of the pandemic, said someone. BUT: we are not alone, even in this situation.

As it was in 970-686 BC, when the Book of Proverbs was written or compiled, we still need words of "wisdom and knowing how to avoid the pitfalls of folly". At least if we want to have "personal well-being, happy family relationships, fruitful labors and good standing in the community." (The NIV Study Bible)

And we still need openness and willingness to listen to the guidance of the "wise". We need to pay attention to the word inspired by the Holy Spirit, which "**is a lamp for [our] feet, a light on [our] path**" (Psalm 119:105). I find Isaiah's statement very encouraging: "**... but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.**" (Isaiah 40:31) I trust we also will experience its truth in our everyday lives, no matter the circumstances.

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



Rise Again

Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again.

Proverbs 24:16

READ Proverbs 24:15–18

Olympic runner Ryan Hall is the US record-holder for the half marathon. He completed the event distance of 13.1 miles (21 kilometers) in a remarkable time of fifty-nine minutes and forty-three seconds, making him the first US athlete to run the race in under one hour. While Hall has celebrated record-setting victories, he's also known the disappointment of not being able to finish a race.

Having tasted both success and failure, Hall credits his faith in Jesus for sustaining him. One of his favorite Bible verses is an encouraging reminder from the book of Proverbs that “though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again” (24:16). This proverb reminds us that the righteous, those who trust in and have a right relationship with God, will still experience difficulties and hardships. However, as they continue to seek Him even in the midst of difficulty, God is faithful to give them the strength to rise again.

Have you recently experienced a devastating disappointment or failure and feel like you'll never recover? Scripture encourages us not to rely on our strength but to continue to put our confidence in God and His promises. As we trust Him, God's Spirit gives us strength for every difficulty we encounter in this life, from the seemingly mundane to significant struggles (2 Corinthians 12:9). – By **Lisa M. Samra**

REFLECT & PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You that in every trial and disappointment You're always close, offering comfort and strength to help me rise again. Amen.

How has God strengthened you after a difficult disappointment? How does that give you encouragement for the struggles you face today?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Proverbs 24:15–18 contains two “sayings”—Saying 27 (vv. 15–16) and Saying 28 (vv. 17–18)—from a collection of thirty sayings ascribed to “the wise” (22:17–24:22). The warning in Saying 27 against attacking the righteous illustrates a key theme in Proverbs: the self-destructive nature of sin and evil. Because God has woven wisdom and goodness into the fabric of reality, to live as the righteous do is to align with the way creation is designed to flourish. Choosing evil, on the other hand, is to work against the grain of God's world in a way that is unavoidably self-destructive.

For that reason, Saying 27 teaches that seeking to destroy the righteous is a futile ambition. Even if the righteous suffer temporarily, good will ultimately always triumph over evil. “Though the righteous fall seven times [the number seven symbolizing many times], they rise again” (v. 16). – By **Monica La Rose**

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